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How Christmas cards revive our forests

Poe's death, funeral break traffic records on INQ7.net

By Jaime Vicente D. Rubio
INQ7.net

THE DEATH and funeral of celebrated movie actor and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. was a blockbuster event not only on the streets of Manila but also online as newsseeking Filipinos broke traffic records on INQ7.net.

POE'S DEATH, FUNERAL BREAK TRAFFIC RECORDS ON INQ7.NET

PHILIPPINE DAILY
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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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POPE John Paul II prays during the Christmas Midnight Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Braving Parkinson's Disease, the Pope offered a prayer for peace in the Middle East, the birthplace of Jesus. AP/VOA

Pope: Troubled world needs message of Jesus

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II told the world in his Christmas message on Saturday that people were yearning for peace everywhere around the globe and expressed particular concern for Iraq, the Middle East and Africa.

"Even [where] peace is wounded" he said in an unusually short "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) message, which he read with difficulty from the steps of St Peter's Basilica.

The Pope, who suffers from Parkinson's disease and in recent weeks...asked the Infant Jesus to encourage attempts to promote dialogue and reconciliation and to sustain peace efforts.

"I think of Africa, of the tragedy of Darfur in Sudan, of the Ivory Coast and the Great Lakes Region. With great apprehension I follow the situation in Iraq. And how can I fail to look with anxious concern, but also considerable confidence, toward that Land of which you are a son?" he said.

Encouraged by chants of "John Paul II, We Love You," he continued with determination to read brief Christmas greetings in 62 languages, including Arabic, Hebrew and others spoken in some of the world's hot spots.

The "Urbi et Orbi" message must be heard by thousands of people under umbrellas in a rainy St Peter's Square and amplified by some

POPE: TROUBLED WORLD NEEDS MESSAGE OF JESUS

CHRIST CHILD. Residents of Barangay Veg in Infanta, Quezon, have left everything behind, including the Santo Niño. Infanta was one of the worst hit by two deadly storms.

CPP 'hit list' denounced

N. Korea ready for market economy

By Ricardo S. Mulay
Core Buster

PYONGYANG—In a rare indication that it's ready to embrace capitalist reforms, North Korea has said "the world is a market economy" and acknowledged that the Stalinist country may adopt the economic shift by social...to countries in Asia and elsewhere to expand their economies.

A top official visiting Beijing, Pyongyang's ally, which is a key position in the United Nations Development Programme, that Pyongyang would not afford to be left behind as China, Russia and Vietnam have re-integrated...in an increasingly globalized world. But he stressed that they have to proceed cautiously as long as the threat lasts in the Korean peninsula remains unresolved.

Beijing-based, a veteran spe-

CANDLES AND PRAYERS. President Macapagal-Arroyo leads survivors of the collapsed Rapador building in lighting candles and saying prayers at the makeshift grave in Barangay Tigman, Real, Quezon, on Saturday

Akbayan leaders fear for their lives

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.
Senior Desk Editor

INDIVIDUALS and groups listed in "conservative documents" in a December issue of the official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines have denounced the report as a "hit list."

"We're not going," Walden Bello, a University of the Philippines professor who is on the CPP list, told Inquirer editors. "We don't think this is an arbitrary listing."

In an open letter to CPP founder Jose Maria Sison on the 36th anniversary of the CPP today, Bello and Akbayan (Akbayan Citizens Action Party) representative Ana Theresia Hontiveros said: "The party which you founded 36 years ago views them as ideological and political enemies...class enemies, as can be 'plucked from their international links."

In its Dec. 7 issue, the Ang Bayan identified the "counterrevolutionaries" in a diagram of individuals and organizations and their links to so-called "fronting and social democrats abroad. The diagram was prepared by the CPP's International Department.

Some personalities involved with some of these groups are already dead, like Pepsy Lagdameo, Romulo Kintanar and Artemio Tadena Lagdameo, reported-ly—and the latter two admitted-ly—to the hands of your armed wing, the New People's Army, the other person on the list, Ricardo

AKBAYAN LEADERS FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES

Reds eye Iraq-style weapons

MANILA CITY—Communist insurgents may be using the weapons smuggled in from Iraq by insurgents in their armed campaign to seize power.

In a statement issued in the

Contraband items become gifts to victims

By Rob Corcoran
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

HIDDEN contraband became gifts of cheer as the Department of Social Welfare and Development...nonetheless distributed to rainbow victims in Quezon "Christmas packs" containing, among others, brand-new clothes that had been intercepted from suspected smugglers.

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman said the thirteen of Customs presided the clothes that formed part of the special relief packages, which also included diapers, condoms and ripped socks boxes but like spaghetti, sauces, canned fruit cocktail and juices.

The BOC has committed up to "P3,000 holes" of confiscated garments and blankets worth millions of pesos to the government's relief efforts per orders from President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to Social Welfare Undersecretary Celia Yangco.

Almost half of that volume has so far been turned over to the DSWD, Yangco said in an interview, adding: "Banaparong those is in jobs because of the country involved. We know that [the contraband] are still out there and would want to get their hands on the goods."

Soliman, along with the President, spent Christmas Day with the displaced families who...the new hotel units in the collapsed Rapador building in Barangay Tigman, a coastal village in Real, Quezon.

The President arrived by helicopter in Tigman at around 2:30

CONTRABAND ITEMS BECOME GIFTS TO VICTIMS

A YEAR AFTER

Tragedy brings Punta folk even closer

By Leticia M. Sulaing
Core Buster

(Second of two parts)

SAN FRANCISCO, Sursogon Island, southern Leyte—The pace of...construction in the...has not yet returned to the...to understand...why slow.

Those who survived the floods and landslides that killed more than 120 in Punta alone on Dec. 19 last year have to work under the government's "food for work" program. But they also have to...make some money to send their children back to school and buy basic needs such as medicines.

The skilled carpenters who are leading the construction have to take time off to earn a living. It is the women and the youth who are in charge of transporting the...filling materials, as well as the water, sand and gravel needed in mixing the cement.

During rainy days, the road makes work a lot more difficult. And a large portion of the...construction site is flush at night because it has yet to be connected to the local electric cooperative's distribution lines. (The few lights that have not just tapped from the houses near the site.)

But from the banks of the several rivers, one can envision what the new village would...eventually look like. There quite of noisy is obvious at the way they proudly...a small...the rivers they were most of the women—the cleanest, the greenest—in the 22 barangays in San Francisco.

Punta is a strip of land at the foot of a mountain along a coast lined by volcanic rocks.

A YEAR AFTER: TRAGEDY BRINGS PUNTA FOLK EVEN CLOSER

Pinoy machos vain and 'sexy', says poll

By Blanche S. Rivera

IT'S BEEN long suspected but now there's proof: Filipino men are so vain.

A survey conducted in six countries in Asia and the United States showed that Filipino men were vainer most likely.

PINOY MACHOS VAIN AND 'SEXY', SAYS POLL

WEATHER FORECAST

Second **FRONTPAGE**

Chavit bawls out Palace official

By Christian V. Esguerra

A FUMING Ronnie Jose Gri Lim "Chavit" Singson gave a top Malacañang official a dressing-down for allegedly arranging wanted President Joseph Estrada's trip to Hong Kong.

In a meeting in Malacañang early this week, Singson confronted Presidential Chief of Staff Norberto Gonzales in the presence of no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to a highly reliable source who witnessed the confrontation. Executive Secretary Edmundo Ermita was also there.

Gonzales had allegedly arranged the meeting to appease the governor who had threatened to withdraw his support for Ms Arroyo if Estrada was allowed to leave.

The source said Singson questioned Gonzales for facilitating the issuance of a passport to Estrada who is scheduled to undergo a knee operation in Hong Kong.

Singson, whose appeal on ill-timed jokes about Estrada's [illegible] in 2000, was also angered with the decision to allow Estrada to visit Presidents Bar 21, where the actor was in a contract to, Luke's Medical Center-Global City and Makati Medical Center, where he has support by National Security Adviser Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Gonzales yesterday denied any knowledge of the meeting in Malacañang or that he had arranged it.

"I'm sorry but let's not talk about [the controversy over Estrada's departure]," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

However, Singson confirmed that the meeting did take place and that Ms Arroyo, Gonzales and Ermita were present.

"It's really wrong for the Office of the President to arrange the passport. It should have been [the Department of Justice]," Singson told the Inquirer in a phone interview, referring to Gonzales' purported offer.

Singson hurt?

In the meeting, the source said Gonzales denied ever saying that Singson was "hurt" by the Sandiganbayan's decision to allow Estrada to leave for his knee operation in Hong Kong.

The governor told the Inquirer in that he was not sure "[but] also negotiated? Only also? Or was not hurt; I'm mad?," he said.

According to the source, Gonzales assured Singson that Estrada would not escape prosecution.

"They assured me that the prosecution would proceed and would be completed," Singson told the Inquirer in Filipino. "If it's any consolation, Estrada's trip was also denied [only] his private [support of about six months]."

Still, Singson said he was convinced Estrada would abscond. The plunder case pending before the Sandiganbayan and would seek refuge in China, which does not have extradition treaty with the Philippines.

Estrada is scheduled for another courtroom hearing tomorrow until Jan. 15 next year.

Singson also decried the practice of "double padlos," claiming that Malacañang was close with Mr. Gon, Celso Gonzalez for instance with Estrada.

Like Estrada, the general is also accused of amassing ill-gotten wealth. He is under investigation for unexplained wealth worth at least P43 million.

SINGSON

GONZALES

Erap in a hurry to leave for HK, fears stop order from high court

By Armando N. Nicanor and Cynthia D. Rubrico

ESTRADA

UNITED President Joseph Estrada is in a hurry to leave for Hong Kong because of talk that Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. could issue a 24-hour temporary restraining order to be effected by the court of [illegible] session on Tuesday.

Already, the former leader failed to get an inbox booking on Dec. 26, the new date set by the Sandiganbayan for Estrada to leave for Hong Kong for his knee replacement operation.

"We have to move fast because of reports that a TRO order issued by Chief Justice Davide is being worked out," said an Estrada ally who asked not to be named.

Davide could issue a TRO on his own even without the Supreme Court in session. But the TRO could be applicable for only 24 hours, the source added.

The Office of the Ombudsman earlier asked the court to issue a TRO on the Sandiganbayan order allowing Estrada to leave the country. This raised fears that the fallen leader would flee prison.

Estrada and defense lawyer were not available for comment. But the ousted president's son, Senator Estrada, admitted that the issuance of a 24-hour TRO remained a possibility.

"But if they do, there are contingency plans of the camp," Jinggoy said.

The young senator—who is due to account in the plunder and perjury charges—said he had already been informed about Davide's power to issue a 24-hour TRO even while the high tribunal was on recess. However, he had not heard of reports that Davide was about to issue a TRO.

Davide's spokeswoman Dolores Espanol has denied doubts that Davide had promises to issue a TRO.

"They are exercising a judicial power; the TRO is not by us, proved by the collegial body of the Supreme Court," Espanol has said.

Still, he said a 24-hour TRO would not keep Estrada from leaving because the Supreme Court will resume session only in January next year.

Scheduled to leave for Hong Kong with Estrada are his wife, Sen. Loi Ejercito Estrada; Estrada's doctor Larry Ebcas; and four police escorts.

Jinggoy had asked to accompany his father, but the Sandiganbayan had set a hearing on the matter on Dec. 28.

Meanwhile, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Rene Osmeña assailed the special treatment accorded by the government to Estrada.

Osmeña said allowing Estrada to leave the country could jeopardize the ongoing probe of plunder, capital and non-bailable offenses under Republic Act 7080.

He insisted that Estrada's ailment have conditions could be treated here by excellent Filipino doctors like his successful eye operation in Makati City.

During the 12th Congress, Bayan Muna had filed House resolutions opposing the granting of any special treatment for the jailed former president which included the special privilege of undergoing medical treatment abroad. The resolutions are pending before the [illegible].

Osmeña stressed that the special and continuous trial of Estrada sets a new one-set only of the country's judicial system like other cases of plunder. Former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson is set to file plea bargain soon.

Task Force Tarongoy takes time out for Christmas

DAVAO—In Filipino back home celebrated Christmas yesterday, Sept. in Iraq, Filipino Rodolfo Robredo Tarongoy secured his 15th day of capturing Abu Sayyaf leader Abu Sabaya and Team Jong's Task Force Tarongoy—the people in Baghdad want to live him—spent the day at work.

"We are sparing no effort and taking no pause to secure the release of Tarongoy," said Team leader Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Rafael Seguis in a statement. "If that means working our contacts on Christmas Eve, so be it," he said.

Seguis said that, like most Filipinos all over the world, he is [illegible], namely Darge Ofal Dalos Rolando Endrez, Consul Elizalde Tupe and Alfredo Angeles Ramirez and had Manny, Joel's

simple and quiet media theme on Christmas Eve.

The war or calamity can, of course, postpone Christmas. Even soldiers in the battlefield make sure that they preserve and treasure celebrations," he said.

"Mr. Robredo [is] working for the release of Tarongoy even during the holidays to show to him-ing with the rest spirit of Christmas, which is [illegible] [illegible] stuff," he added.

Seguis stressed that there would be just the expression of President Macapagal-Arroyo's commitment not only to Tarongoy and his family but to the millions of overseas Filipino workers all over the world.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo has reiterated that the protection of OFWs is a pillar of Philippine foreign policy.

DAWAO BLAST

US Embassy help sought on 2 Americans

By TJ Burgonio

AUSTIN Secretary Raul Gonzalez has asked the United States Embassy in Manila to help locate two Americans suspected of being involved in the May 2002 bomb explosion in a Davao City hotel on their could face prosecution here.

Gonzalez, in a letter to Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, requested the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security in rounding down Michael Meiring and Stephen Hachey, believed to have fled to the US.

"Should both persons be confirmed as to their names, I request that background investigation be conducted by US authorities in the Manila to help locate the two Americans suspected of being involved in the May 2002 bomb explosion in a Davao City hotel on their could face prosecution here," he said.

Gonzalez, in a letter to Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, requested the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security in rounding down Michael Meiring and Stephen Hachey, believed to have fled to the US.

Meiring, whose ID card identified him as a leader of the Moro National Liberation Front's Bangsamoro Armed Forces, "suspiciously disappeared" after reports claimed he was spotted soon by embassy agents from a local hospital, he said.

"Consequently, the efforts of the Philippine government to investigate and implicate could not be conducted," Gonzalez said in his letter.

Hughes, for his part, had claimed that he was in Meiring's hotel room 30 minutes before the blast, but did not find any bomb, Gonzalez disclosed.

"If these persons were convicted in connection with the bombing of the Evergreen Hotel in Davao City which clearly appears to be an act of terrorism, I am sure the US government will not tolerate the terrorist act," he said.

Contraband items become gifts to victims

p.m. to beat Mass with the families of the more than 1,000 people who died in the collapse of dozens of storm and typhoons that bypassed Quezon and neighboring provinces early this month.

The four survivors were always by hand since after 10 days under the rubble of the collapsed building were also present, Archbishop Secretary Marita Cayetano said.

According to Cayetano, Mr. Arroyo met with local officials of the province, military and police to discuss the relief and rehabilitation efforts in the areas affected by the collapsed building.

He said Ms Arroyo and the four survivors led a ceremony in which candles were lit on a symbolic Christmas tree constructed from debris from the collapse.

After the ceremony, Ms. Arroyo, Soliman and Cabinet Officer for Provincial Events Consuelo Lim-cancio distributed the Christmas gifts to the relatives victims, Cayetano said.

He quoted the President as saying the 1,000 families from the province will receive the gifts before Christmas Eve.

"Let's not be selfish and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

METRO
Editor Ester G. Diyasuqui ■ Assistant Editor Connie B. Bino

Alert bus driver foils Xmas Eve bombing

By Lolit B. Solaiman and Alvain Pepe

ROUTINE can be boring, but it can save lives.

At 7:45 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Freddy Vela Sulaiman, driver of a G Liner passenger bus, was checking on his unit when he found a black backpack under one of the seats on the middle portion of the vehicle.

The bus was then parked along the northbound lane of Quezon Boulevard in Quiapo, Manila, while waiting for passengers and getting ready for its trip to Cainta, Rizal. It was near U.P. Ikot-Ikot restaurant and the Sta. Cruz station of the Western Police District.

No owner

According to the police, Sulaiman asked passengers who owned the bag but no one claimed it.

Feeling suspicious, the driver inspected the bag by feeling its contents and found it heavy and containing what seemed like a box.

Sulaiman then asked passengers to get off while he sought the help of police.

Members of the Western Police District Explosives and Ordnance Division (EOD) later found a bomb inside the bag.

A ranking member of the EOD said a bomb-sniffing dog was sent up the bus and it sat beside the suspicious backpack, indicating that it contained explosives.

EOD operatives then sprang into action and the bomb was "rendered safe," meaning its detonation device was removed while leaving the device intact for further scrutiny.

Dismantled

At the EOD office at the WPD headquarters, bomb experts dismantled the explosive device to give them a clue as to who could have planted it on the bus.

Embarrassed police said that he noticed a male passenger who got off at Lawton and got off in Quiapo, just across the Quezon Bridge over the Pasig River and less than a kilometer from where he boarded).

An explosives expert from the National Police said the bomb was made up of TNT powder, possibly taken from unexploded mortar shells.

The timing device used was an ultra-miniature timer. On estimates, the expert said, the bomber could not say what time it was set to go off.

Another source from the WPD said the bomb contained two kilos of explosive powder, which he added would have created a highly deadly blast inside the stationary bus.

The composition of the bomb was confirmed by another source from the PNP. The source added that the bomb's signature, or distinctive marks in its construction, was similar to the explosive devices which Al Qaeda member Ramzi Yousef taught members of the Abu Sayyaf Group to make in the 1990s.

Circa 1995

"The signature of the bomb is circa 1995 and is very circa. Graded TNT to non-metal only by dynamite fishermen," the source said.

The source added, "Bombs of the kind originate from Mindanao. The signature fits into devices used by the Abu Sayyaf Group which were taught to them by Yousef."

In 1995, police arresting the unit of Roman Catholic Pontiff Pope John Paul II stumbled on a bomb-making factory run by Yousef after a fire hit a unit of the Joselito Apartments in Malate, Manila, where the Al-Qaeda member had set up shop.

Yousef managed to flee the country but was arrested in Pakistan.

Abu Sayyaf member

Intelligence reports have said that Yousef trained members of the Abu Sayyaf in explosives before he was arrested. Details of the training given by Yousef to the ASG was discovered inside his Malate apartment.

The Abu Sayyaf is a terrorist group that was involved in high-profile kidnappings of local and foreign tourists in the 1990s.

The discovery of the bomb came two days after the police in Manila were put on alert for the threat of terrorist action and for any presidential candidate becoming the li

Senior Secretary Raul Gonzalez had announced that there were intelligence reports that some groups would use Christmas as a launching pad to destabilize the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Visitors create festive atmosphere at NBP

[illegible] 26 [illegible], but not forgotten.

Close to 3,000 visitors who have swooped to the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City created a festive-like atmosphere at the penitentiary, said officer-in-charge Insp. Emilio Tapia.

He said it was heartwarming to see inmates enjoying Christmas with their families.

He said several nongovernment organizations had also been present to give gifts to prisoners, who received slippers, food, shirts and [illegible].

Among those who came were ABS-CBN broadcasters Paulo Avelino and Antonio Pedro de Leon who visited their kin, Robert Pedro.

According to Tapia, Christmas is the only occasion when outgoing visits are allowed by Bureau of Corrections Director Nestor Fabanes.

Sonny C. Carvajal

PERILS?A. Tagged by victim's sons. [illegible]

Suspect in cop's killing arrested

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE POLICE arrested Friday night the primary suspect in last Thursday's killing of a police officer in Pasig City.

"We arrested the suspect just moments before the traditional Noche Buena," city police chief Sr. Supt. Raul Medina said over the phone.

Suspect Glen Ricalde, 25, of Barangay Rosario, Pasig, had been hiding in Barangay Palatiw, also in the city, since dawn Thursday, when four men shot and killed PO3 Florencio Astudillo inside a passenger jeep, according to Medina.

"The suspect was positively identified by the victim's companions as the same person who shot their leader," Medina said.

Medina added that the suspect was traced through the "grapevine"—meaning through informants.

Acting on a tip, the police raided a house in Palatiw at about 11 p.m. Friday and arrested Ricalde.

They did not swear arrest, Medina said.

PO3 Florencio Astudillo, 48, leaves his sons, Fernando, and Francisco, 20 and 16 respectively, from whose terminal in Quezon City he was boarding a jeepney when he was killed last Thursday.

The men had just arrived from Cagayan. The police said that like many others, Astudillo wanted to be with his sons during the holidays.

They ate, then took a bus to Edsa Crossing, where they took a jeepney on their way to Barangay Pinagbuhatan in Pasig City.

When they reached the Rizal Medical Center on Pasig Boulevard, the robbers declared the hold and directed the jeepney driver to turn right to a small road.

The robbers had Astudillo's cellphone, his belt and eight cents.

Quoting Astudillo's surviving sons, Medina said the officer promptly resisted and tried to reach for his gun.

"The robbers shot him. Not contented with that, they also stabbed him several times," Medina said.

After divesting the other passengers of their belongings, the robbers fled toward Kalayaan Avenue in Makati City.

Astudillo's sons rushed him to the Rizal Medical Center where he was declared dead on arrival.

Rizal Park tree: East meets West

By Tarra V. Quismundo

LIKE a monument to the trade-and-Filipino Christmas celebration, a Christmas tree—about a hundred spirited feet the Metro...stands tall in the heart of the capital.

Sharing a place for heroes at the Rizal Park in Manila is the 42-foot Shidung Pinoy Tree, the centerpiece of the tourism department's Shidung Pinoy program.

It was unveiled on Dec. 1 at the park's amateurs hall, a few meters from the Rizal Park lagoon and aligned with the monuments of national hero Jose Rizal.

The unveiling highlighted the Department of Tourism's Christmas celebration that included a month-long array of concerts and cultural performances in the sprawling park grounds.

"It is unique because the decorations are native materials, not like the others which are hi-tech. It looks nice," said 39-year-old Rebecca Manuabe, who brought his wife, daughter and year-old twins to the park Friday from their hometown of Bacoor, Cavite, to celebrate Christmas.

The tree, funded by telecommunications giant Globe Telecom, was erected, assembled and decorated for a full month as its site in the Rizal Park, through the handiwork of exhibit design and fabrication firm Kubisa Inc.

"We used indigenous materials from the barrios up. We brought materials from local markets like Divisoria, where there is a concentration of native materials," said project manager Ito Rivera.

Covering the tree's 18-foot wide base are various sizes of bamboo, which are round, incised, cross-cut made of bamboo strips.

On the layer above these were placed large rainbow hats, followed by a layer of dashet-cut wood native fruit trays.

The second layer on top was covered in fuzzy, a native fiber, providing a fitting screen to the rice top soaked with dried to lavish leaves.

Lively colored parol or star-lanterns were also being encased the tree.

The latest shadow of these to chocolate brown gave the tree's body a unique monochromatic color, while its finer parts in gold but playful hints of color, cast soon in typical western Christmas trees decorated by mostly classy metal or plastic decos.

CHILDREN check out the unique Christmas tree on the Rizal Park grounds that promises a native treat to park goers. [illegible]

Karaoke sparks gas blast

By Tina D. Santos

A 18-YEAR-OLD woman was severely burned when a spark from a karaoke machine caused a gas leak inside her home in Caloocan City's north.

Police said Angelita Tolo was preparing for their Christmas celebration at about 4 p.m. Friday when liquefied petroleum gas that had been leaking from a defective gas tank exploded.

Tolo, of Dunop Bukid Street, Barangay 86, suffered second degree burns and was taken to the Presidente Diosdado Macapagal Memorial Center for treatment.

Investigators showed that the gas tank in the house had developed a leak and that gas had accumulated inside the poorly ventilated house.

While reportedly preparing for their celebration, Tolo thought of turning on their karaoke.

The machine was reportedly equipped so the woman connected it to a power outlet.

However, a spark was reportedly emitted while she was inserting the plug into the outlet.

Police said the gas exploded and threw Tolo to a few feet away into the floor, badly burned.

The incident prompted authorities to reiterate earlier warnings and remind the public against buying cheaper but usually defective LPG tanks.

CPP 'hit list' denounced

To page A7

Reyes, is already in your order of battle," Bello recollected said.

Outside of the Reyes case, currently under detainees, say, Rodolfo Bello, chair emeritus of Akbayan and Lorena Ann Hamada, Bro Ali Taquir – supposedly, are also among the individuals listed. Does this mean you intend to kill us one by one?" the two said.

Lagman and Tañada were accosted at on Feb. 5, 2001, and on Sept. 26, 2004, respectively. Atty. Reyes identified Lagman as someone from the PNP (Patrolin ng Mamamayang Pilipino), IIRD (Hukbong ng Mamayang pawang Pilipino) and Sandatahang Pilipino, was identified with NPA (Bebelabanayong Partido ng Mamayang Pilipino).

Besides Bello, Rey Morales and Gary Serrano were tagged as Pop Dem (popular democratic) and Bayan (Bagong Alyansang Pilipinas Demokratiko); Rosalio and Bren of Bukayok; Manjette Lopez and Lidia Sadpal of OFO (Organ Ng Pro letaryo Internasyonal). Sony Melo, Jessica of UP (Unibersidad Ng mga Pilipino); Lito Banayo of UP (Partido Ng Manggagawa Ng Pilipinas); Bel Olalia of KPM-PPR (Revolutionary Proletarian Army) ABB (Alex Boncayao Brigade); Ric de los Reyes of BPM-Mindanao; and Tito de la Cruz and Caridad Bautista of MLM (Marxist Leninist Party of the Philippines) and SMB (Mahayahaymong Bukluran Bayan).

"Those are people who left (the CPP and its allied organizations)," Bello said when the names were read to him.

Bello said he was killed by his former comrades in the ARB (the former urban unit of the NPA) because of his treachery when he married himself in pursuit of Ding Cruz Guzilla Larson, a former chief of the Philippine National Police and Iloy Enrile (former President Joseph Estrada)," Reyes said.

Figment of imagination

"That supposed NPA hit list was only a product of the malicious figment of imagination of military propagandists. It only exists in between the popular image of the Red fighters from among the masses," Reyes said in a mobile phone interview when asked about the big brown fingers.

Reyes said the presidential representative of the alleged NPA "hit list" was part of the demolition job against the NPA being undertaken by the military.

He testified at some former intelligence officers of the government, who, according to him, were spreading wild tales on their supposed inclusion on the NPA list of people targeted for assassination.

"Probably they are now in line with the lawless acts they committed against the people and the revolutionary movement," Reyes said. "If they have nothing to fear, then why fleeing from?"

Reyes said other people also left the movement, "but none of them have done nothing against the movement, they just go on with their lives."

He reiterated that the NPA had nothing to do with the murder of Lagman. "Reyes was killed by his former comrades in the ARB (the former urban unit of the NPA) because of his treachery when he married himself in pursuit of Ding Cruz Guzilla Larson, a former chief of the Philippine National Police and Iloy Enrile (former President Joseph Estrada)," Reyes said.

Deep sadness, anger

Nakpil is also worried of the possible implications of the Sing Layag diagram.

She said she knows what it means to be labelled "communist-destroyers" by the CPP.

"Several former leaders as stated of being counterrevolutionaries and agents of the state have been killed by the CPP while others have been abducted and tortured like former colleagues are not the only targets—organizers and activists from people's organizations and movements are within the sphere of influence of the CPP and the NPA have been threatened and/or killed," she said in a statement.

"Many of us who have given our youth and much of the best years of our lives in advancing the national democratic struggle, many of us whose loved ones have died in dirt nor was where the rebels would get the capability to make and use such weapons.

The 4,000-member guerrilla force has adopted the use of homemade, rifle grenades and other weapons seized from the military, police and civilians as well as improvised land mines and other crude bombs.

The CPP statement said "the revolutionary forces must employ all forms of struggle in ousting the Arroyo regime and accomplishing wrought thereby."

It suggested exploiting popular sentiment raised by the death toll, or the month of top rebels and Jose Ma. Sison in the Netherlands for May 10 presidential election.

For, who died after suffering a stroke, land never conceded defeat but charged he was cheated of victory for having last week was one of the largest in the country's recent history.

The CPP also said NPA patrolmen should explain alleged grants being within the Armed Forces following charges of corruption against senior and retired military officials.

The statement rebels called on all peace talks with Manila in August, accusing the Arroyo administration of not doing enough to persuade the United States and its Western allies to remove them from their government's list of foreign terrorist organizations.

Both rebels have called assistance of ceasefires covering the Christmas season, but there is no sign peace talks will be resumed. AFP

Reds eye Iraq-style weapons

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Hendrick Vanjoe city ahead of its 36th anniversary today, the Communist Party of the Philippines reiterated its threat to strike power and called on its followers to exploit popular discontent to topple President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The CPP said its forces were planning to stay and wage getting more organized, adding in guerrilla wing, the New People's Army, was "now trying to develop the ability to make and use the weapons that the Iraqi resistance is now using."

These would include "rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices, mortars and other close range weapons," the statement said.

It did not say where the rebels

Downsizing of personality cult

A visit to Pyongyang reveals a perceptible downsizing of the Kim Jong-Il personality cult. Portraits of the 63-year-old leader have vanished from key locations, and his official title changed, along with that of Kim Il Sung, his father and predecessor, still adorn the main halls of a few select offices.

The state media have stopped referring to Kim Jong-Il as the "Dear Leader" as they continue to play up his prodigious achievements. In one instance, he was said to have shot a hole in one on his first outing at Pyongyang's new golf course.

At least two special economic zones, inspired by the Chinese models in the 1980s, are operating. But their performance hasn't been

Deepening crisis

Nakpil said the deepening crisis of the Arroyo regime and economy, which has been intensified by the CPP-inflicted casualties on government troops, "will definitely push more people to the revolutionary movement."

"The article and diagram are based on patently erroneous information, outrageously biased judgements, and ignored analysis and theory matters. More than pedantic, this is tragic for a movement slumming itself across the anti-revolutionary and seeking to be a governing force," she said.

Bello and Beades said they were puzzled and a little annoyed because "while we were all once national democrats, our movement was part of a much broader based anti-dictatorship united front that sought the end of one-man rule through the ouster of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos."

They noted that social democrats, who have always marched side by side with national democrats, church groups and ordinary citizens who loved the country and wanted an end to the dictatorship, "in the international arena, our antecedents have actively led in strengthening the social movements against the ill effects of globalization on struggling economies of the Third World."

Beades chairs the committee on human rights in the House of Representatives, while Bello is the recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the alternative Nobel Prize.

"Against which standards does the national democratic movement judge such efforts as counterrevolutionary?" they asked Sison, who is based in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Universal human rights

They said Sison would once again remind us on his claim that he was singing an armed and just war in defense of the Filipino people's universal and democratic interests.

"Considering that we are no longer part of your protracted war, does this make us class enemies and hate gamer as enemy targets?" it borders on. This year-old obsession over armed warfare matters than all other forms of struggle are inherently inferior and a threat to the primacy of the vast working good of a virulent upheaval," Bello and Beades said.

"Even more deadly, it is justified to eliminate such a threat since your concept of revolutionary justice not only excuses but necessitates killing."

The Philippine left is a much, much bigger community than the CPP means it to be, according to Bello and Beades.

"We want to impart upon those that of the party, he founded a treasury interested in upholding universal human rights, it has to assure its role in the progressive movement—as an agent of democratic and peaceful revolutions, not as a hapless harbinger of violence, hatred and murder," they said in the open letter.

Besides earlier told, human editors that the CPP was angry at Akbayan because the party-list group, which has seven House seats in the House, was taking a role that the CPP thinks it should do alone. "And we're doing it without guns," she said. *With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Pia Hontiveros-Lauron and wires*

N. Korea ready for market economy

To page A7

cation overseeing USAID projects in Asian socialist countries, was told time the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the North's official name) was resolving relations the second Bush administration, anyone would continue to policy of, "hatred and hostility" or adopt a less strident approach to the government of Kim Jong Il.

Pyongyang, which is popularly blamed Pyongyang, which is believed to have eight nuclear weapons, for undermining regional stability and condemned as in a "rogue state."

Kim Jong Il has talks aimed to defusing the tension have been stalled, but North Korea and the United States are reported to resume negotiations in Beijing after the weekend. Trade administration the Bush presidency, will adopt a new tack.

Despite its status as the last bastion of Stalinism in the world, North Korea has made some tentative steps in recent times toward a free market-style economy.

Downsizing of personality cult

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Heavily made-up police

Only the first hints considered to be world class, such as the Kumgang Resort, are found. They offer a few amenities to tourists such as karaoke bars, sauna baths and ruler costumes designated as "cheering." The Stalinist rule still brought if necessary to have heavily made-up women police policewomen direct traffic on largely deserted roads.

During a visit to the National Study Hall, a compatriot and I were told that we could not ask our guide was reluctant to take us to the cafeteria "where the food may not be of good quality."

To qualify it was ready to warm relations with the Philippines, which is to established diplomatic relations in 2001, Foo Chuie Jun Yong Jin of the Committee for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries, insisted Pyongyang's Mansugdae Artists's Theatre at a dinner hosted by families and me. His government was ready to bring North Korean culture, including its famous odd noodles and Pyongyang ocean to the Philippines, we were told.

Oh Carol

In a society virulently opposed to the West but attack towards is good Princess Diana, postage stamps in the '90s, we found it a sad amusing that the first lookalike hit "Oh Carol" was familiar among many citizens. Three people we met readily obliged us with their full rendition of the number. Oh Carol, the Neil Sedaka song, was a US chart success and was "Love Story."

Our request to see the US spy ship Pueblo was immediately granted. It's now a museum piece seized in its original state when captured in North Korean territorial waters in 1968. Our British military guide showed us the bullet-riddled deck, bridge, the high-tech intelligence gear, the quarters, and the galley and mess, where three Pilipinos starved. The 83-men crew, skippered by Commander Lloyd Bucher, who died last year, were released 11 months after signing a confession and apology that they had violated North Korean territorial waters and were engaged in espionage.

President Lyndon Johnson issued an apology to North Korea after initially denying any wrongdoing.

"President Johnson insisted it was the first and last time for the United States to apologize to us. But the American had no real reason when they again apologized after their helicopter was shot down in our territory in 1994," deadpanned our English speaking guide.

With national disasters, an emergency one-man rule, a society woefully short of basic necessities defining its identity, North Korea stands today at the crossroads.

If diplomacy and compromise can prevail, then China's decision in the nuclear issue talks that may well result in a just and lasting accord, it may be the signal North Korea needs to launch history off on its course and bring itself to march in step with the rest of East Asia. Otherwise, a poor and hungry tide of humanity with political sting makes a prospect too awesome to contemplate.

Tragedy brings Punta folk even closer

To page A7

There is not much space for gardening and yet every Tuesday before their lives were changed forever, the villagers would bring their flowers to nearby barrio of vegetables, mostly planted in recycled cans and plastic bags.

Even during the typhoon months after the landslides, the women trekked their potted fruit and vegetables around the makeshift shelters.

Beloved nurse

The people of Punta fondly remember Dr. Rosalinda Ruth, who recently said all her assets in the United States to come to her native Monte City.

Ruth herself remembers how she first gained recognition as a needy person: coincidentally on the eve of 1986 by running Punta into a make-shift rural health unit.

"The people helped me a lot, they were very cooperative," she recalled when she visited this week. "I was in my father's birthday in November last year, more than three decades after she left Panaon island.

Ruth was not rural health nurse at a time when there was no doctor to provide primary health care to the people of San Francisco. I remember having to take an hour-long ride on a rural motor boat with her just so I then a 1-year-old, could see a doctor in Masbate in the mainland.

She willingly got up at night to answer calls from ailing villagers, walked mountain trails for hours, and braved the strong waters separating the Aslagad (mainland) from mainland.

For complicated cases, she consulted her brother Ed, who was then working with the province of Southern Leyte as a rural health doctor.

Ruth started with as few many years. As city managers swallows, she and my sons Cameron wept when they brought me to Roman City where my parents lived, to care my schooling.

After Ruth left for the United States in the mid-1970s, the people she had served missed her greatly. They never forgot her for there was no other nurse no doctor visited and gone to stay.

Urgent need

The need for reliable health services is as urgent as ever.

Tubod's mayor-by-day-doctor-by-night says required him to operate a small station beside his office into a clinic. There, his small assistants perform minor operations under the light provided by a small standing lamp.

Abundant help

The survivors are grateful for the help they have received from various groups.

At the height of the crisis, Dr. Ruth's former colleagues in the Philippine Red Cross and Rotary Club of Quezon City, Ruth's alma mater, enabled the fishermen to restore their livelihood, and carpentry tools that proved equally valuable when they started building their houses.

The Salvacion army donated 30 motorized fishing craft, each of which is now being run by a group of five fishermen.

When we visited the relocation site, Manager Cecilia Valdez Bello, Ruth's former classmate at the Ateneo de Manila University, was supervising the setting up of a multi-purpose building. Gonzaga is helping its village organize a cooperative that will produce native and ready-to-eat delicacies for commercial sale.

This recreational site doubles as a small stock as part of its project to rehabilitate the areas destroyed by the landslides.

Environmentalists are studying various options, including the propagation of native grass on the mountain slopes to help stabilize the soil, according to my cousin, Alvan Mahilum, who has accompanied Ruth and Bello-Valdez in the tours on landslide areas in Punta, Liloan and San Ricardo.

Relatives now based in the areas and abroad have cash, which were used to buy food and other necessities.

In one instance, we were able to pool P1,20,000 from relatives. The money was used to hire extra labor to speed up the construction of the houses and the restoration of the septic tanks.

Improving infrastructure

When the landslides hit on Dec. 19 last year, San Francisco was isolated from the mainland because the earthen road was made impassable. My children were then on a vacation, and my cousins had to come in a motor boat from Liloan to collect them.

It was the first time I had travelled to Punta by boat.

On the just, my good days, we had to negotiate the bumpy, 30-kilometer road linking Liloan and San Francisco for over an hour.

The tragedy must have sensitized the consciousness of our national leadership. The roads have since been widened and graded, and the long-delayed concreting of the national road was started by the contractor, Dolmo Thai, immediately after the May elections.

The project, expected to be completed in about three years, will link Panaon to the municipalities of Liloan, San Francisco, Pintuyan and San Ricardo.

When President Macapagal-Arroyo visited San Francisco immediately after the landslides, Ruth met up a small entourage that included Cabinet members to send and receive text messages on their mobile phones.

As the construction activities were on full swing this year, Smart's facilities were upgraded. Even subscribers of Globe were enjoy a strong signal in areas along the seashore.

With better communication and transport facilities, the people of Panaon are hoping for better economic opportunities.

The island is the take-off point of the still-an-still off (on-and-off) ferry service between Leyte and Mindanao. There is now talk of opening up a ferry terminal in San Ricardo to connect the island of Panaon to Surigao City in Mindanao, about an hour-and-a-half away by ro-ro. At least, the much-hyped Aseang Republic National Highway is getting to be a reality in our place.

Reunion

On Nov. 4, we gathered once again for the 86th birthday celebration of my mother, Soledad.

Like the time when we all came home for my grandfather's 80th birthday in 1978, the whole village took part in preparing for the occasion.

The common question was: "Will we pass through with our reunion in May 2005? Where will we hold it?"

As far as I am concerned, we should, and it does not matter where.

We still have a lot of work to do and we still have to mobilize resources and support. But all of us are looking forward to the completion of the redevelopment.

The survivors plan to clean up the now-deserted Punta and slowly restore it into the economically productive enclave that it once was.

Our relatives may not be able to live there permanently, but for most of us, Punta is not meant to be abandoned and forgotten.

"We intend to many happy memories there," said my cousin Marilou Magbanua, a Ateneo-based cardiologist, who walked home to Punta immediately after hearing about the landslides last year.

She had been away for more than 30 years.

Firms not ready to back SEAG

By Marc Anthony Reyes

EXCEPT for the finals, everything appears to be in order for the country's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

With only 10 months left to the Games, the organizing committee is still looking for sources of money to finance the country's third hosting of the 11-nation, biennial Games.

Philsea secretary general Steve Hontiveros said they are in the process of finalizing the guidelines for sponsorships for the May 27 to Dec. 3, 2005 SEA Games with the help of a Malaysia-based marketing firm.

He expressed optimism that the country can produce the P800-million estimated cost to host the 41 sports disciplines that will be held in Metro Manila, Subic, Bacolod City and Cebu City.

However, some Philsea officials are worried over the slackening synergy since there have been no reports yet of corporations that showed willingness to fund the Games.

They said the marketing ploy may not be able to cover over half of the expenses and that it would eventually be the government chest will be left shouldering the lion's share of hosting the biennial meet.

The government is counted upon to help chip in for the expenses through government-owned and controlled corporations and government financing institutions.

But although these firms have committed to help, they haven't announced any amount they were ready to shell out.

Last week, Philsea chair Ollet Puglisanan toyed with the idea of slashing the number of sports disciplines to cut some expenses but this plan may not jive the rest of the SEAG Federation which had already formalized the roster last November.

According to SEAG Federation rules, the calendar of events must be finalized exactly a year before the meet so that member nations can get ample time to prepare.

In place of this, Puglisanan said the team size of contestant per sport—now pegged at around 500—could be increased instead.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Pope: Troubled world needs Jesus

From page A1

rebuilding of cities in the future, one in more than 50 countries, including several predominantly Muslim nations.

Showing the vigor of his illness and the weight of his office, the leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics told the globe was marked by violence and disrespect for many places.

"Before the rift where you in helpless, brothers be murderous the spread of violence in so many forms, the menace of untold suffering," he said, wearing gold-colored ornaments.

The 84-year-old Pope's message was the shortest it has ever been in his 27 Christmas seasons as Pontiff—a concession to the illness that makes it difficult for him to speak more than a few sentences at a time.

"Let there be an end to the numerous situations of unrest which risk degenerating into open conflict; let there arise a firm will to seek peaceful solutions, respectful of the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples," he said.

A peace punch

The message was only about half as long as it has been in previous years. Still, it packed the type of power punch that has become a trademark of his papacy.

"You, Prince of true peace, help us to understand that the only way to build peace is to flee to horror from evil, and to pursue goodness with courage and perseverance," he said. "Here and moment of great evil, of every people on the earth, come with trust to the coils of the saviour!"

It was the second event for the revel. Pope to host Mass 12 hours.

At his Midnight Mass in St Peter's Basilica, he used a brief sermon to exhort he said the troubled world needed the message of Jesus more than ever.

He longer able to walk, he sat slightly here on his throne at the Midnight Mass, attended by representatives of some 150 governments, and appeared very positive at times.

During the Midnight Mass, Christ's birthplace of Bethlehem was not far from the Pope's mind. One of the Pontiff's prayers was for the Middle East.

"May the Holy Land, close to the faithful of the three great monotheistic religions, be able to see times of prosperity and peaceful co-existence and reciprocal respect among all those who live there," urged the prayer, read by a Germanic nun.

Bethlehem scene

In Bethlehem, pilgrims and a new Palestinian leadership celebrated Christmas in the town of Jesus' birth with prayers for peace on Saturday, lifted by cheers hope following Yasser Arafat's death.

At Midnight Mass, moderate leader Mahmoud Abbas filled the area which had been left empty for as after for three Christmases past because Israel had stopped him from travelling to the West Bank town—arousing fears of worsening bloodshed, a charge he denied.

Welcoming the new leaders, the Little Palestinian by the Holy Land, a Palestinian, urged all parties to end violence.

"It has lasted too long," Michel Jubbran, Pope John Paul's representative, said in his message. "It is time for Palestine and Israel to deliver the evil of violence and give birth to a society of brothers and sisters in which nobody is subject to another, nobody is occupied by another and nobody threatens the security of another."

Amid the reverence and prayers, the silver-haired Abbas in his gray headwoman's suit out to a very different figure in Arafat, who reversed other traditions and a black and white headdress.

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Abbas, who is expected to win an election next month to choose a successor to Arafat, is urging an end to fighting and warns talks with Israel.

"We extend our hand to the Israelis—but only to sign treaty, reach peace—a peace built on justice and right," Abbas told cheering officials, tribute and others evening.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has also called 2005 a year of opportunity for peace.

Reuters

Mary, Joseph wear waterproof boots

ISINAYA, Quezon—The Nativity scene at the makeshift in this disaster-stricken town was meant to be this year with Mary and Joseph wearing waterproof boots.

Joseph sported a spade instead of a staff—it reminded of how the tremendous have had to dig themselves out of the mud that swept through town by the storms that devastated the area.

Catholics still attended Mass on the traditional Christmas Eve Mass in their best clothes even though they had to pick their way to the cathedral, tiptoeing carefully dug out of the mud, through muddy streets.

Bishop Bernardo Tirona yesterday said the church was trying to keep the Christmas spirit alive despite the tragedy that still looks everywhere's minds.

"What is important for us is to lift the spirit of the people," he told Agence France Presse near the cathedral.

"They are responding beautifully. They are coming to Mass with a smile on their faces," he said, pointing at crowds in the church that was dug from the mire by Philippine Navy engineers.

The bishop recalled that he was initially reassured no one would come to the Mass. "But the place was packed," he said.

But things are still tough in Isinaya and its neighboring municipalities affected and in need of help, which took the brunt of a storm that hit on Nov. 29, followed by typhoon "Winnie" on Dec. 2.

About 1,000 people were left dead or missing, most of them in the flash floods.

In contrast, only 35,000 votes rejected video streaming during the May 2004 elections.

A page view is computed for each web browser on a given site. The number of page views measures the volume of traffic accessing a certain website. As circulation shows the level of readership of a newspaper, the number of page views indicates how many times a website is being accessed by online users.

A page view is not the same as a hit, a measurement that includes images as well as Web pages.

Previous traffic peaks on INQ7.net, the online news website of GMA-7 and the Philippine Daily Inquirer, were the multi-tasking of Mr. Severo at the height of the Edsa People Power II uprising in January 2001 (3.8 million page views) and the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny (2.6 million page views for a two-day period).

Like INQ7.net, other Philippine websites also saw a surge in traffic, particularly of its two portal companies, sources in news from the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA-7, as well as from Internet browsing users team of editors and engineers. The site also carries newsletter of events from the two eighty magazine Mouthwash.

Poe's death . . .

From page A1

When news broke on Dec. 14 that Poe had succumbed to a massive stroke, the site received 2.2 million page views from 1.5 million unique visitors, its highest ever since election.

The figure surpassed the 2.1 million page views recorded the day after the May 10 election, when Poe conceded President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for a full six-year term.

In the days immediately after Poe's death, the site averaged 1.7 million page views a day. Ten percent above the site's average one million of one million page views a day.

The site received 2 million page views on Dec. 22, the day Poe was buried. From Poe's death to his burial, the site received 17 million page views.

Over 100,000 users also viewed the site's live, five video streaming of Poe's funeral procession and burial as broadcast on GMA Network, video streaming provides the coverage.

The number of people who watched Poe's funeral online or streaming video was the highest number of viewers the company had ever recorded on its servers, according to Wilson Chua, its

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drop provided.

Pinoy machos vain . . .

From page A1

than their Asian counterparts to value good looks and toned bodies and money-conscious.

While a considerable number of Asians were felt that looking good was "neither important nor unimportant," 68 percent of Filipinos were thought it was "very important," according to the survey conducted by global market research company Synovate Inc.

In the same survey, 68 percent of Filipinos make felt they were sexually attractive, coming a close second to Americans, who scored 69 percent.

Only 23 percent of men in the Philippines felt they were unattractive, 17 percent both in Taiwan and China, 16 percent in Korea, and a mere 11 percent in Hong Kong.

"All this attention to grooming seems to have a positive impact on self-esteem, too, with around half of Filipino males appearing that they consider themselves sexually attractive. That's double their nearest rivals in the region," Synovate managing director Cecile Sarthou said in a statement.

The survey, conducted from 1,000 men aged 15 to 64 through the Global Omnibus telephone survey. The study was conducted among men from various socioeconomic classes in Manila, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and the United States.

The survey also touches on the motivation behind the men's pursuit of good looks. Surprise, surprise—it was not mainly to impress women.

If you insisted that 9 out of 10 Filipino men liked to look good for themselves, with only 1 out of 10 saying they liked to look good for others.

This indicated that Filipino males were very like their American males, of whom only 7% percent said they liked to look good for themselves. Koreans ranked next to Filipinos in wanting to look good for their own sake.

Despite being the most vain, only 3 percent of Filipino men had a fancy personal effect kit, while 65 percent of Koreans had one.

The most popular grooming item for Filipino men was the cologne or perfume. Seventy-four percent favored this. 57 percent said they use moisturizer, 49 percent, antiperspirant, 39 percent, conditioner, 36 percent gel or mousse, and 23 percent chose shaving cream or lotion.

"The findings have a wide-ranging implication for the marketers of... personal grooming products. Traditionally, marketers have addressed this market by selling to wives, mothers, sisters, girlfriends. Now, they can go directly to the newly-minded beautiful male," Sarthou said.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Rumsfeld says US troops in Iraq face bleak new year amid violence

BAGHDAD—A rankier blast killed eight persons and wounded 19 in Baghdad on Christmas Eve as US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld admitted on a surprise visit to troops in Iraq that they faced a bleak New Year.

The bomb exploded at 8:30 p.m. in the affluent Baghdad neighborhood of Mansour, said US military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel James Hutton, adding that the casualty toll might rise as emergency crews attend the wreckage.

The blast came amid a series of bombings around the country as insurgents try to derail landmark elections scheduled for next month.

"I don't know if it was a truck bomb or not, but the truck did explode. It's too early to say if it was a suicide attack," Hutton said.

A huge fireball ripped through the area near the Jordanian, Libyan and Moroccan embassies, damaging several homes, witnesses said.

Ambulance sirens wailed and shots rang out in the chaos that erupted after the blast, where a few hours earlier some 40 Christians braved the streets to attend Christmas Eve mass amid fears of sectarian attack.

Chaldean patriarch Emmanuel Delly had ordered that the usual 10 p.m. service be brought forward to 6 p.m., the last year, as Iraq's dwindling Christian community of more than 700,000 people braced for the worst.

"Despite the threats, my husband and I have come. I will not let the terrorists intimidate me and make me shirk my religious duties," said Widad, a 58-year-old lawyer, as she heavily guarded Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

Playing were the country at dawn, Rumsfeld painted a bleak picture of Iraq ahead of the much-anticipated Jan. 30 elections.

"All along the way it is bumpy and it's tough... It is not a smooth, easy path to success. There are setbacks," Rumsfeld told troops at Camp Fallujah outside the rebel stronghold recaptured by the military last month.

"But you will look back when your are about my age and you will be proud."

Rumsfeld's three-hour visit to the main northern city of Mosul, where a suicide attack on a US army base killed 22 people on Tuesday.

Rumsfeld told troops that although the US author headed "blunt" for US forces in Iraq, they would ultimately prevail over insurgents and be part of something "truly historic." AFP

SGT. ANGELA Dawson of Rockford, Illinois sings Christmas carols during a midnight Christmas service at KBR Miami in Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 25. AP

US poll-inspired 'incivility' named year's top word

LOS ANGELES—The electoral shorthand for a divided America and the protracted resistance of the US presidential race generated the defining words and phrases of the year, a website specializing in language said on Friday.

The top phrase of 2004 was "red states/blue states," followed by "moral values" and "two Americas," the website yourdictionary.com said in its annual review of the changing state of the English language.

"Incivility," which shot to prominence to describe what some commentators saw as the unprecedented ebullience of the US political debate, was the year's top word, said Neal, LL. Thesis, president of the language website.

"The main event that people were watching across the world in the past year was the US presidential campaign," Beyrich said. "That had a direct effect on English worldwide."

In assembling its annual list, the website polls a network of linguists and language enthusiasts and tracks how prominently words are used in the media.

In 2003, the runner drew heavily from the long war, including "embedded," to represent journalists accompanying troops, and "shock and awe," a term used by US military planners to describe the opening phase of the war.

Other top words for 2004 included "blogosphere," a term for the collective writings of Internet commentators who maintain web logs, and "flip-flop," a charge of inconsistency that hurt Democratic nominee John Kerry.

Technology contributed two of the year's top words. Apple Computer Inc.'s iPod is fast becoming a synonym for digital music, and has even become a verb along the lines of "to Google," the website said.

Meanwhile, 2004 was the year where "IM," or instant messaging via the Internet, "became a way of life, even in the corporate world," it said. Reuters

Japan threatens retaliation against North Korea

TOKYO—Japan on Friday threatened retaliation against North Korea such as ending all economic ties unless the communist state resumed Japanese people it has kidnapped or gave a "concrete response" on their fate.

Japan said it would send a "strong protest" to North Korea accusing it of handing over false evidence to prove the deaths of eight Japanese people it abducted during the Cold War.

"We will have to take a serious response this time if North Korea does not sincerely respond," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshi Hosoda, the Japanese government spokesperson.

"We strongly demand that North Korea immediately send home the survivors. The Japanese government demands the sincere response of North Korea."

A recent poll found that nearly two-thirds of Japanese people want economic sanctions against North Korea, despite warnings by the commission that it would consider the move an act of war.

Japan has already suspended food aid to North Korea.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who has taken political credit for trying to engage Pyongyang, called the false evidence submitted by North Korea "extremely regrettable" and refused to rule out sanctions.

"I would like to leave all kinds of options open," Koizumi told reporters.

Koizumi has previously indicated that sanctions—which would take the form of banning remittances by North Koreans in Japan or banning fly engaging ships from docking at Japanese ports—would be a last resort.

It is right that he still favors a conciliatory approach, Koizumi declined to set a deadline for North Korea to respond to the protest, which will be submitted through diplomats in the pm.

"We are not thinking about it at present," Koizumi said of imposing a deadline.

Hosoda, asked whether Japan was preventing North Korea with an ultimatum, said: "I don't see it that way." AFP

Asia marks Christmas with prayers, fireworks, fears of terror attacks

SINGAPORE—Indonesia's Christians packed tight guarded churches to celebrate Christmas on Saturday despite fears of renewed attacks while the president of the Philippines appealed for an end to corruption in a seasonal message.

Celebrations here inspired Singapore to the shelly South Koreans exploded of flood ground, torn open presents and feasted with families in Australia, mankind carried on Sunday's festivities.

In Indonesia, Christians celebrated Christmas under tight security amid worries that Muslim militants linked to al-Qaeda planned attacks in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

More than 140,000 police officers guarded embassies, churches, malls and hotels, police said. The faithful, however, shrugged off the threats and joined worship in packed churches in the capital, Jakarta. There were no reports of violence.

Soldiers with machine guns and bomb Jesus Asian Roman Catholic Church in East Jakarta as worshippers planned through metal detectors at the entrance.

Some Asia was wary of 11 churches targeted in bomb attacks across Indonesia on Christmas Eve in 2001, killing 19 people and wounding about 100. The churches were blasted on Jeonsah Is. Jamiyah, a Southeast Asian terror network.

The Christian minorities in Muslim-majority Indonesia and predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka, where churches have come under attack, were also worried with police on alert. Authorities also deployed security forces to guard churches in Western Indonesia and Bangladesh. There were no reports of trouble.

In China, Christians held midnight services in government-sanctioned churches in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities, while millions more celebrated in private.

The government says just over 1 per cent of China—or about 16 million people—are Christian. But the number is likely much higher because many Christians, facing harassment and detention, worship in unauthorized "house churches." AP

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Godfather needed to save volley—Bernardino

By Mayong B. Cuello

VOLLEYBALL needs a godfather soon.

Jun Bernardino feels that a person to take care of the national volleyball program could be the solution to the country's woes in the sport, especially with the Southeast Asian Games in Manila coming.

"How I wish, sooner than later, that we'll be able to find a godfather who will grace the ceremony here," Bernardino said yesterday during the ceremonies of his tribute.

Names floated the Philippine Amateur Volleyball Association (Pava) president for not being able to come up with a solid program to qualify a world-class players of international caliber for the country's

"It's understandable to read something like that," Bernardino said. "Especially from someone who knows this sport inside and out."

Bernardino, who together with Meeting Maximino organized the Shakey's V League in shipping in his share to revive the interest in volleyball in the country.

The league's second conference has in fact taken a theme of "bringing back the glory," which Bernardino said is also aimed for the SEAG in December next year.

"We have to make an impact in the SEA Games next year, make the country beating the event and all," the former PBA Commissioner said. "The talent is there, we just have to be able to push the right buttons."

"We came up with the idea [of the V League] in order for us to bring back the glory, and what better time to rally an entire country behind our team than next year for the SEA Games?"

"But it will not be easy doing this," Bernardino said. "I'm sure Tats [Suzara] knows that we are prepared for time, given the fact that we have less than a year left to program."

Suzara is a member of the world governing International Volleyball Federation's development committee and was the Pava's secretary-general the last time the Philippines won a gold medal in the SEAG.

"That was more than 20 years ago, and look at the players we have now," Suzara said. "At that time, we should have players who are better than the old-timers, but it's not the case."

Bernardino knows that a godfather program will work, considering that he was in the PBA when Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco took up the cudgels for basketball and produced numerous international stars for the country.

That program also produced the likes of Sherwin Calma, Sunday Lim and Allan Caidic, to name a few, who made it all the way to the list of the PBA 25 Greatest Players.

Names made his sentiments after the PBC team, made up of supposed has-beens who have been run of the spare for so long, surprisingly managed to hold up a 4-2 record in the V League despite playing against the top players in the country to day.

BERNARDINO: Push the right buttons.

SPORTSWATCH

Tabuena, Sepulveda rule Cebu Chess

CEBU CITY — Tabuena and Victor Sepulveda defeated their respective rivals to emerge champions in the two tournaments of the Cebu Executive Chess and Professionals Chess Association (Cepca) recently at the Rainbow Learning and Leisure Center in Cebu City, Tabuena, top 10 in the 1999 Grand Asian Chess Championships in Malaysia took the scalp of Cepca Executive in the championship match to win the tournament in the past. Senior Cepca Executive Sepulveda emerged champion of the monthly Cepca tournaments. Sepulveda on the other hand trounced Danny Pestañola in the final round to take the Cepca December Tournament, which was opened to all non-members. — Victor Sumalinog, Contributor

MCC active chess kicks off

THE METROPOLITAN Chess Club (MCC) Founcher Category 1 and 5 action drew tournament-wide effort 1 p.m. on Dec. 18, with Philippine Chess Federation officials themselves. One of FIDE's many positions and the Philippines' 1,924 President Joey Antonio de Madrid sponsoring the tournament. The event takes off at the club's headquarters located at the 4F of JM Chess Bldg., near LRT 2 Recto Station in Quezon City. The event organized by MCC founding chair/president and former Olympian wife/MCC/Olympian Jean Antonio, vice president and director of the SEAP-Philippines membership committee arm of PCF. Children Category 1 and P1,000 Free Registration, call MCC at 4264613 and 09189624189. — Victor Sumalinog, Contributor

Beach volley invades Golf Power

"GOLF POWER" today, returns to special feature on the Cignal Beachwalk Women's Beach Invitational Challenge with two exciting matches in this action-packed round. University of Asia and the Pacific plays against College of St. Benilde 2 at the collegiate division and Philippine Air Force Lions Philippine Air Force 2 in the open division. The matches were played at the beach volleyball court in the Camarin Sports Center in Taguig. The best-of-three-set event will be manned by sportscaster Lichtson and sports analyst Gilette Tiamson. "GOLF POWER" for good every Sunday at 3 p.m. on ABS-CBN and is followed by the popular boxing show "Sunday's Entertainment" at 4 p.m. Entrance is brought to you by Samsung, Bamboo Mum, Myers on and PCSO.

New fight show unwraps

A NEW boxing program featuring upcoming Mindanao boxers will open on over ABS-CBN. "Battle Royale," hosted by the Bi Comisario Governor Manny P. Pillar will have its maiden telecast at 6 p.m. on Jan. 2 and will be aired regularly every Sunday thereafter. The show will feature the Philippine Boxing Federation (PBF) No. 8 Flyweight Bonifacio "Pinoy" Galit of Davao City and Jeremiah Singsonsuan of Tacloban City recorded an impressive win in the opening fight held at the Lantawan Hall of the Royal Mandaya Hotel in Davao City December 19. Shooting and Singsonsuan at 7 p.m. the second round.

Gonzales-Cantiga on Ringside

TORNADO Philippine junior flyweight champion Eugene Gonzales displays his fighting prowess once when he meets Dante Cantiga in today's Gerardo Gun-Miguel's Ringside TV Boxing from 3-4 p.m. over ABS-CBN. The scheduled 10-round battle is presented by Gerardo Enterprises and ABS-CBN, and will be beamed to the United States through Mabuhay Channel. An accredited attraction, Brandon Wang Hualing and Leo Zabalbarrazo will feature undercard bout. Wang Hualing and Leo Zabalbarrazo will feature undercard bout. Wang Hualing hosts Tondo's Beach. 2023 next to open encounter, crushed Manila recently and gained Manila's featherweight king Manny Dacquiao to a close strong 4th round knockout win against Thai Sakrung 36 Sathoy at The Fort.

Ginebra books first outright semis slot

MID-AIR: guard Jaworski Torres soars for a lay-up against San Miguel gunner Dondon Hontiveros in yesterday's game.

By June Navarro

A NEW Sologic gave Barangay Ginebra die-hards something to cheer about this Christmas by sparking the Gin Kings to a 105-102 win over Talk 'N Text before an overflow crowd in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Sogic successfully challenged the bad-saddled big men of the Phone Pals in the paint, hanging in 16 of his 25 points in the final period as the Gin Kings went on to finish their elimination run on top of the standings.

By closing out their 10-game elimination schedule with a victory, the Gin Kings will automatically advance to the semifinal round, which will mean bypassing the solitaire phase and the best-of-three quarterfinals.

The win likewise wrapped up the preliminary round of the eliminations with a 10-5 record, a full game ahead of the Phone Pals and the duel Talaburgers (12-6), who will depose the second semifinal seat for one game playoff.

"We have a good game for them say coaches," said Kings coach Joe Lampanero.

In the first game of yesterday's jampacked Christmas doubleheader, Sic Belasco notched the hoops with 27 points and grabbed 22 rebounds to help Sandiganbayan stave off rampaging Red Bull, 93-78.

It was Gin rescued from this conference that Belasco one of two players who accomplished the feat this conference, the other being Eric Menk of Barangay Ginebra.

Arnie Schreiber scored a cool seven high 23 points and actually kept the Gin Kings in fighting mood throughout, but it was the heroics of the in-laced Sologic in the clutch that sent the Barangay Phone Pals.

Sologic unabashedly burst into more just seconds away from the 8:30 mid-point.

Jimmy Alapag had a career high 29 points and eight three-pointers for the Phone Pals.

The Scores:

First game

SAN MIGUEL (93) — Belasco 27, Hontiveros 12, Dandan 11, Reyes 10, Cruz 9, Ildefonso 7, Ibanez 6, Ibanez 5, Ibanez 4, Ibanez 3, Ibanez 2, Ibanez 1, Ibanez 0, Ibanez 0, Ibanez 0

YEAR'S LAST MAJOR RACE

Red Star Rising, Sexiest head cast

By Edwin Villanueva, Correspondent

RED Star Rising will set out to defend the crown in the Philracom Classic Open Championship today at the Santa Ana Park.

But just like in the recent Presidential Gold Cup where he could only finish third, the pride of Isidro and son duo of Pomeroy and Michael Tolibas is facing a wall of obstacles in the race's ultimate encounter.

Although PGC winner Empire King is not running, race-shy rabbit, "brotherly half" First Round, highly-touted import American Pharoia and seven-year-old Lyceum entry the duo 1 Lifetime race competing over the rigorous 2,200-meter journey.

The distance may favor Red Star Rising as it will be the re-pairdown of our jockey Reynaldo "Dhaniy" Raquel, Jr. in his new-found love but the big weight of 58 kilos can more than what he carried in the PGC two-weeks ago may yet hamper the bid of the Bicolano Jr's Chotto program.

"Empire Kid's entry couldn't any break to us following in. Let's see but I believe in this horse a lot," said Raquel, tapped to love of Filandia Stable who opted to recruit Dreams.

Aside from the handy Jockey and Empire Kid's entry, the other main threat to Red Star Rising's bid is the Lyceum entry of Mandaluyong congressman Neptali Gonzales II, who is also a multi-titled owner of Philippine Racing Commission (PHILRACOM) champion Lyceum Queen.

Lyceum entered as a Premier Jockey Cup winner and

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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The day after

EDITORIAL

FROM THE TABLES of the rich, groaning with food, to the humble homes of the poor, where there is little enough to share—for all of us, Christmas is over. This doesn't mean the holiday season is over since it will last until after New Year's Day, after all. Still, for all of us, the giving and receiving is pretty much over.

Except for the very well-off, many Filipinos have gone through the holidays spending far more than they should. Many of us had surely hoped to receive more than we actually got. Whether it is better to give more than we got is something each individual must decide. We believe that this holiday season, far more people did more genuine giving than in recent years.

Somehow, despite the financial pressures that face all of us, people still found a way to give more. Among middle-class Filipinos, we have seen a remarkable trend in recent years. People, instead of giving material gifts, have been giving to charity or to good causes in the name of their friends. This is truly a remarkable way to celebrate Christmas. We hope more and more people, as they experience this kind of sharing, decide in the coming years to share in this manner as well.

Spontaneously in many offices throughout the land, companies also decided to give up part, or all, of their Christmas party budgets so they could send relief goods to people suffering from the effects of the typhoons. Instead of Kris Kringles and games, people donated to charity. There were a number of cases where management was surprised by their employees taking the initiative to give up parties or they could give to those in need. Each and every Filipino, from whatever walk of life, who gave up something so that others might have a little something, is a Filipino who truly leaves what the holidays are all about.

The Armed Forces and rebels both put away their rifles, so that the country may have a little peace. This makes the holidays even more precious. At least for a little while, throughout the land where rebellion and military offensives otherwise dominate life, at least everyone can enjoy some peace and quiet.

Poverty haunts us. Natural disasters have afflicted us. Pollution and rebellions divide us. And yet, rich and poor alike, most of us came together as families, and spent some time in prayer and laughing, joking, sharing. We did it in many different ways, each according to our means, but each, we believe, at least for a moment, united by the ties of affection and celebration. If we find our wallets emptier, let us hope it was because we spent for the most unfortunate, and not merely to display our good fortune.

Foreigners always say that Christmastime in the Philippines is like no other. They are right. In a world that has grown increasingly materialistic, good fortune is confused with the accumulation and display of possessions. Here, Christmas is still for the family, the extended family. This is, in the end, for all the faults of our clannish nature, a truly precious thing we can all enjoy.

The days leading up to the holidays were filled with stories of private and public grief, of tragedies shared and experienced. These stories of grief reminded all of us to cherish all the more those we love. These stories inspired us to reach out, with an embrace, with flowers, with a prayer. Our country has experienced many Christmases marked by adversity and misery. Our elders can always tell us that even if things look bad, things have been worse before.

It can never be so bad, however, if we always remember that those who have less should receive a little something from those with more. If we always bear in mind that we all feel the same emotions, and are capable of the same wants, then those who are wanting can always hope for a time when today's hunger and hopelessness will go away.

Order to the border

FOREIGN COMMENT

DURING A STAR-STUD press conference, US President George W. Bush again tackled the problem of foreign workers that arises in his country every year. He recognized that the growth needs in numerous are on coaxing economic and drug traffickers...

The Mexican government should aggressively take on the commitment of putting the white house to make a real position aimed at ending...

In fact, legalizing the status of millions of undocumented would bring order to the border, because nobody knows coverage and distribution of jobs would allow officials to identify and track foreign workers. The war on terror works now a chaotic and open to the possibility that terrorists will take advantage and use it for their own benefit.

El Universal (Mexico City)

The morning after

SEPARATE OPINION

Dagupan A. Cruz

CHRISTMAS is over but not the season. We will rejoice the coming of the New Year and, for those who would prolong the season of good cheer, the Feast of the Three Kings. Many of us must have risen late this morning because of the pleasures of the night before in celebration of the birthday of the Lord. This is one occasion when family reunions and not necessarily from spirits of the other kind, are justified.

Despite the problems festering the nation, we observed Christmas with the usual goodwill that the day inspired. Even those of other faiths joined in the common feeling of fellowship and love. Carolers and Christmas cards especially marked this year because of the thousands of Filipinos scattered by the rapidity of these illegal wages who cherished the hope that could have prevented the killing floods.

No less culpable is the government for its failure to avoid the tragic disasters.

Apart from these deliberate commissions or sinful neglect, the responsible officials are equally guilty. The authorities should have taken the necessary measures to prevent the operation of similar companies that have happened before for the same greedy reasons. Instead, the irresponsible officials dallied or conspired, so the companies were been enforced because of their malfeasance.

Many Christmas parties were marked with frugality rather than the usual extravagance. Even generous were sparing and not excessive as before except where they came from thoughtless giving. There was a general tendency to economize on the celebrations in order to help for the ravished families that lost loved ones, fragile houses and meager belongings to the angry waters. The savings derived from such prudence and given to the casualties made such ordeal a little more bearable.

Everywhere in metro Manila, and also in the less of the coming people passed to their love reminding to perform their works of mercy. The merry one listened to the wealthy with plenty to spare but included the middle income earners and even the poor with little to share. They extended their generosity quietly, without fanfare or publicity or expectation of material praise. Except for some companies that announced their goodness and so commercialized it, most of the people made their donations anonymous.

It is one of the virtues of our race that we spontaneously rise as one to help others when tragedy or misfortune strikes. We showed this selflessness again this year as when the vital loss inflicted on the typhoon victims. They received overflowing Christmas presents with the usual cheer as the rest of the country did, but without the customary fuss. But the "love for angels of our nature" made their relative sizes less pathetic with acts of candors and generosity.

Let us hope that this extraordinary sum of generosity and compassion will serve cause to admit our nation's character. Many of the high values we inculcated in the present past have deserted us to these more sophisticated times, like simple courtesy, respect for elders, modesty in both social life, and even simplicity if we should also lose our innate kindness for our fellow human beings, and for animals too, then our people will be truly less an moral.

The inertia of happiness is still heightening the use of the Yuletide and we should enjoy it with the still blinking Christmas lights. Continuing the carol-singing with which they were starting up to welcome the coming of the infant Lord, it will be an unending effort to distract the facts what the joyous season ends. Until that joyous moment comes, let us continue to savor the fantasy of Santa Claus, of the reindeers and sleighs, lumpsum imaginings and belief, of children whose greatest gift of innocence must in time end with the coming of age and reality.

We now joyfully await the coming of the New Year next week for this is still another event that calls for sustained celebration. Meanwhile, we must take the opportunity to review discarded laws, renew forgotten friendships, heal wounds that have festered, and, yes, add small greeting cards that may have been unintentionally omitted. Christmas comes but once a year but we only for a day the memories. It will continue until the last collect is made and the last greeting card from the north has been sent. Until the Christmas tree is removed, and we can declare it has to close the full moon's night.

In our jubilations over the birth of the Infant Lord, did we forget to greet Him on his birthday and to thank him for his many blessings on our beloved land and its people? I hope not. Let us be reminded by our current difficulties, we should continue to keep strong our faith in his goodness, remembering that, as Albert Einstein says, "God is subtle, but he is not malicious."

Christmas moments

MOMENTS

By Jerry M. Gorbea, SVD

QUESTION: When was the first plane ride of the Holy Family?
Answer: On their flight to Egypt
Question: And who was the pilot?
Answer: Mm... Pontius Pilot!!

* * *

Today being Christmas, we are just trying to inject humor in our upcoming line, but really there was nothing humorous about the first Christmas. A pregnant woman had to give birth to her first-born Son in a lowly manger because there was no room for them at the inn. A few days later, a worried father had to take the Child and his mother and flee to Egypt in the night to escape the wrath of King Herod. (Mt. 2, 13-15, 19-23)

The message of the Holy Family is clear in spite of poverty and the uncertainties of life, we will be all right if we hold on to each other, and we hold on to God together.

* * *

I never realized how hard the economy was until I talked to Santa Claus over the phone. I asked him how Rudolph his red-nosed reindeer was. "Oh, delicious!" was his reply.

There are difficult times for many of us. In fact, a survey [red] survey said that because of inflation and unemployment this year, only 64 percent of Filipinos (from 83 percent in 2003), and 77 percent in 2003) were looking forward to a merry Christmas. However the survey also said that 2 out of 3 Filipinos are still generally hopeful.

And what makes the Filipino happiest, especially at Christmas? The family and just some food at the table. That goes to show that we, as a nation, with all our misery and broken dreams, still value the family.

And what is keeping our families intact and what keeps us hopeful through it all? Certainly not our board of politics, but our faith and our belief that we will survive.

* * *

My sister Bing shared with me her experience with her students who were asked to write a letter to Santa Claus. Some kids asked for toys, some asked for money, or for the health of their parents. But the most lovely letter was from a little girl who wrote: "Dear Santa, don't bother to come. We don't celebrate Christmas in Sudan..."

How many homes no longer celebrate or feel Christmas just because there's no peace at home, or someone just died, or someone is seriously ill, or someone is causing problems at home? Or simply because they have no home?

* * *

An inspiring insight comes from the parable of caring, the family on wheels. Actually it is depending to see a whole family living together in a junk car, gathering trash, salvaging whatever food from the garbage together. They spend the night in whatever safe, dark nook or corner they can find in the city, especially in the elements. What is inspiring about them is that they are together, and they stay together through it all. Somehow, they manage, they laugh, they go on, because though they have nothing, they have each other. So they have done what love everything, for love no one.

* * *

I had a Christmas moments when I celebrated Mass in an isolated army camp somewhere in Cabuyao for the 1st Infantry Battalion headed by Col. Efraim Rioza. Somehow, the Christmas message of peace and hope affected some members and mostly in their faith and children who did life and little every day, especially in their rescue and relief operations in Quezon during the recent typhoons. Many a time fell where we prayed in silence and allowed God to enter in each of us. Then we celebrated the Eucharist in candlelight.

* * *

Another Christmas moment was when I had a healing session for the patients in a public hospital in Legaspi City. There until the wee, the infirm and the wounded, I experienced the most wonderful Christmas. I was joined by 3,000 years ago, a real lit which all needs as much peace, healing and redemption.

* * *

On a personal note, our family experienced a Christmas moments when my cousins, the Galleles—Ed, Rody and Lito—and their wives and children flocked to spend Christmas in the Philippines with their teenage children who have never seen the Philippines before. It was the Linda's sixth year ago, a real lit which all needs as much peace, healing and redemption.

* * *

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Strength and fortitude

REVEILLE

Raimond J. Fuentebella

If it hasn't more than two weeks since deadly typhoons hit the provinces of Aurora and Quezon during the country's weekend of the century. Most recent casualties have taken over the front pages of our newspapers, topping the stories of death and destruction brought about by "Violeta," "Winnie" and "Yoyong." It is too soon to forget their names. As the survivors get colder and can put on summer clothing and partake of the holiday fare, let us linger in mind that they continue to need our help and assistance.

Here is a survivor's story.

The first typhoon to hit Barangay Sta. Isabela, Quezon, typhoon "Winnie" was not another storm to the residents. It was a typhoon which they had no clear notion of how many times it has been to their place. Nobody can remember. The only difference was that perhaps this one was a little bit late in the year. Already cooking items are abundant in an endless typhoon "Violeta"; she did not yet clear of Mindanao when "Winnie" made its way, and surely, like Isidro G. and her husband were not too stunned about the downpour. But one thing, compared to other seasons in the barangay, drives into extra concrete and had withstood stronger typhoons in the past.

On Nov. 29, one minute falling rains early morning and continued through the day. By evening, 6:00, became aware of rains, including Isidro's husband, Felipe, who was out in the sea, the coastal began to rise to the extent that the coastal began to rise to the extent that the coastal began to rise to the extent that

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to
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Edna Juan V. Santolanes jr.
Editor

What happened to waste segregation?

Tutili Valentin season, the volume of garbage is expected to go up as Filipinos celebrate the birth of the Messiah with gift-giving, parties, reunions, excessive boozing and fireworks.

Today, a day after Christmas, garbage bins overflow with discarded wrapping paper, cardboard boxes, food scraps, plastic cups, soda and beer cans, cellophane and other kinds of refuse—biodegradable and non-biodegradable.

Most households and business establishments do not put biodegradable waste in plastic bags separate from the non-biodegradable waste, although the three-year-old Solid Waste Management Law, or Republic Act No. 9003 requires segregation.

People do not segregate garbage, a violation of the Solid Waste Management Law, because of the dearth of information on the law.

People must start separating biodegradable from non-biodegradable waste because the proliferation of dumps across the country threatens their health. Dumps can contaminate the water table and breed disease.

There is no need for dumps if people recycle and segregate. Fifty percent of waste is biodegradable and can be composted to fertilize gardens and fields. The other 50 percent is non-biodegradable but 30 percent of that can be turned into hollow blocks or decorative pavement. The remaining 20 percent, which includes hazardous wastes, can also be recycled.

So segregation and recycling make sense.

For a change, give plants this season

By Gloria Fermen Ramos

A nine-year-old scavenger, doing not a living but instead alive by an area, another of garbage in the dumpsite in Payatas, Quezon City, Metro Manila. Who owns scavenger his death?

(Hi Jaime)

The Barangay and the city for allowing children and adults access to the hazardous open dump? The dump is to itself prohibited.

The Presidents, for not enacting this health and environmental laws are implemented by local governments units (LGUs)?

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, for not overseeing its mandate to clean the barangay-level?

Or us, the consumers, who throw away used items left with no care at all where they end up?

I have not become a generation of scavenging and irresponsible dwellers of this planet? The effects of a garbage crisis are public—the carrying capacity of landfills is permanently packed to the limit, the search for possible landfill sites could ruin the LGUs and people oppose the idea of a dumping ground in their neighborhood.

Ground water

The skin diseases afflicting scavengers and dogged stories are a daily sights, the dying marine life as a result of indiscriminate dumping of plastics and toxic wastes is a health, the declining quality of ground waters, and the barren forest lands. The list goes on and on.

Oh, yes, we do have environmental laws enacted to stem the tide of ecological destruction brought about by man's greed and indifference. But, as environmental advocates and author Antonio A. Oposa Jr. says these laws languish in the "dickhead of inattentive planners."

The Solid Waste Management Law or Republic Act No. 9003 is environmentally sound waste segregation and reduction among Filipinos, it affirms the rights of citizens to a healthful environment, gives responsibility to local government units and makes them accountable for the violations of or failure to implement the law.

LGUs are responsible for waste collection, storage and disposal because the barangay and other local leaders are presumably in more touch with the problems of mass waste and closure of their waste tenancy.

Criminal liability

Sadly, three years after RA 9003's effectivity, waste segregation is not practiced at all in most offices, public places and homes, except in few model barangays and cities like the barangay Lao in Cebu City and Davao City. The people do not understand that by not segregating, failing to segregate, training solid wastes and not segregating, they are committing criminal liabilities.

Ordinary citizens do not hold the monopoly of transgression, however. Public officials—in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and even constitutional bodies—defy the law.

There is a decade of infractions and violations of environment laws in the law. Worse, violators go scot-free. The deaths in the Guimbaliban fire of the governments, people and business sector. The stakeholders do not care to monitor and enforce the law and the cooperation each play in its implementation.

How do we make each individual aware of the ecological time bomb—that is ticking and of his or her role in preventing the explosion? We must confront and respond to this challenge quickly here.

It is high time we focus our efforts on our responsibilities in caring for our community and country. We must move our government officials to action, call the attention of the violators, and be involved in the awareness campaign. If everything else does not work, people can exercise the option to enact compliance from government officials and sue for accountability like what some lawyers did in a southern city.

We are now in the midst of the holiday season that usually finds people go somewhere to shopping for gifts for loved ones. The materialism of decorated goods, stalkers and other consumables will predictably ensue. For a change, why not give creative recycled items instead? Or better still, give a gift of life—a seedling, plants or even seeds. It is not only economical but also ecologically promising.

The season's joy is—each one does realize the garbage and conserve the Earth's resources. Let us do our share for the trees, for planet Earth, for our survival and for the children yet unborn.

(Gloria is the deputy chair for the Visayas of the National Environmental Action Team—Integrated for the Philippines.)

Landfills are unnecessary if we recycle

By Jose C. Papa and Alex V. Papa

Heavy rains flooded Metro Manila and adjoining provinces last September, killing properties and causing heavy damages to property and the environment. Landfills were proposed as the major culprit.

As the Christmas holidays roll again, garbage, as we take note of Republic Act No. 9003, which mandates ecological solid waste management and closure of dumps by February 2006.

The environmental challenges to the future and present of the time.

The national clean-up of ecological solid waste management are waste reduction, re-use, sorting and segregation, recycling and composting.

A detail with waste at the source, in the households, or at least in the barangay Ecology Center (Eco-Center) or Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Therefore, there is no need for dumps and landfills. Let us not be ignorant of the abominable of hoteliers, pollute the surroundings and cause catastrophes as the Payatas dump did in 2000.

Dumps

In fact, there are some 800 open dumps, more than a hundred unsanitary dumps (e.g., in Dapitan, Rodriguez, Tanay and Tuguegarao), and four "sanitary" landfills. Still, more than a hundred are being proposed.

The eco-center system of RA 9003 classifies solid wastes as biodegradable, non-biodegradable, and special wastes.

Biodegradable (metabolic) waste includes kitchen, yard or garden, animal and human wastes, cotton wipes, sanitary napkins, diapers, latex products, paper or cardboard.

Separate these from non-biodegradable (metabolic) waste, which include plastic wrappers, glass, plastic, rubber, bamboo or branches, composites (such as juice packs), and metallized materials. Special wastes are biodegradable or non-biodegradable wastes which require special waste management, like household batteries, fluorescent bulbs, electronic wastes, used oil, motor vehicle parts, contaminated containers, and other hazardous wastes.

Garbage fact facts

- In Metro Manila, about 9,000 tons of garbage or 0.5 kg per person is generated daily.
- Five areas outside Metro Manila, the solid waste collection ranges from 0.5 to about 0.8 kg per person a day.
- Residential urban centers generate between 0.5 and 0.7 kg a day, while those in rural areas generate 0.3 kg per person a day.
- Percentage composition of solid wastes in the Philippines (percent by weight): Food and food waste 53.6 percent; Non-leaf/wood 22.8 percent; Wood 11.1 percent; Food waste 11 percent; Paper and cardboard 10.2 percent; Plastic and plastic-coated products 9.8 percent; Rubber 4.1 percent; Metals 3.3 percent; Glass 3.8 percent; Leather and rubber 1.8 percent
- Majority of Metro Manila's wastes are biodegradable.

Source: Ecowaste Coalition

Segregation and composting

With an eco-waste system in place in an enlightened barangay, biowaste is composted at home (in sacks or other containers and covered with soil, sawdust or similar materials, each enough heat from the sun, accelerates natural decomposition) and some moisture or moisture loss) that also help prevent foul odor). Biowaste can also be deposited in a clean container and brought to the eco-center for composting.

Non-biowaste is cleaned, dried and set aside for the can-picking junk collectors or brought to the eco-center, where the recyclers or junk dealers can go and take their pick.

About 50 percent of waste generated is biodegradable and may be composted in relatively low-capital and labor-intensive facilities. Of the other 50 percent, which is non-biodegradable, some 30 percent may be re-used or recycled (manufacturing—including so-called residual that junk shops don't usually buy—such as candy wrappers and seemingly useless discarded materials but which can be turned into decorative, gift items or hollow blocks and other construction materials.

The remaining 20 percent, which includes hazardous, odorous and toxic waste, should be treated first and then recycled. Consider first the reduction of the harmful substances. The municipality or city could take up responsibility for this task from the barangay.

Barangay Lumiere (Barrio), Pampanga (formerly Sapa), Quezon City, Bacoor (Bagumbayan) and Sta. Cruz (Barangay) were recently chosen as the best five model villages for eco-waste management.

Barangay Talolohon declined to join because the municipal dump was right in its area.

On Aug. 23, however, it finally got its dump closed. Encouraged by the support of Bulacan Gov. Josefina dela Cruz in cooperation with the municipality of Calumpit and Barangay Sulucan Bitungkuran, local officials led by Barangay Captain Romeo Yeung and Councilor Boni Isidro convened the community's residents to create segregation plan, the zone, composting at the household level, segregated collection using three wicklers and segregation of construction in a modular structure.

The council then passed a resolution to close the dump. Barangay Chairman Cruz agreed after passing the construction of his 12 eco-color barangay capsules, who must now put up their own eco-centers. Barangay Talolohon, with a population of 18,000, shows that home- and barangay-based eco-waste management is through segregation, recycling and composting works.

(The Plaza are founding members of Bulacan Kalikasan Movement (bmail: bulacan_kalikasan@yahoo.com)

Some resist now into segregation

By Aileen Magsalay

The production of goods based on non-indefinite but created a fundamental transition of waters that are not easily decomposed. Instead, they generate and build up harmful agents and liquids and volumes, non-solid wastes.

They become not only eyesores but major threats to health and ecological balance. The disposal of this becomes a source of social conflict because communities are critical of their eco-waste handling and dispose of health are.

Quite a number of environmental laws have been enacted in the country. The most recent of which is Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, which calls for the mandatory establishment of a national program that will manage the control, transfer, transport, processing and disposal of solid wastes in the country.

Under

One of the key features of the law is segregation at source. The scheme has been sought by areas of segregation-at-source, segregation-at-collection in the implementation of RA 9003. Several communities have adopted the scheme and established composting and recovery facilities in their area. Some have become models that are being replicated in other areas. Those that succeeded were recognized in the recent National Search for the Model Barangay in Eco-Solid Waste Management.

The province cannot hypothesize the quick answer emanations has also adopted waste segregation.

The government, to collaborate on with several NGOs, is pushing for the full implementation of RA 9003. Technical assistance is being provided to LGUs to help them implement the law.

(Magsalay is the executive director of the National Solid Waste Management Commission.)

Across the NATION

GMA vows pursuit of log poachers

By Aaradhna Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

GENERAL TINIO, Nueva Ecija—On Christmas Eve, President Macapagal-Arroyo was undergiving. To illegal loggers and illegal cutters of timber, that is.

"Mangyang ang pagbitay ng pamahalaan laban sa kanila (The government is really determined in its move against them)," she told a press briefing here Friday afternoon.

In about three months, she said she would be given an account of what had been done about prosecuting illegal loggers and timber poachers and in stopping illegal logging.

"By the third week of March, I am expecting reports of many good accomplishments of the Task Force on Illegal Logging headed by Gen. (Visitor) Corpus," she said.

"So you can see now, the task force is conducting raids on sawmills and has been running after suspected illegal loggers. We are really determined to punish them."

The President ordered military and police officials to arrest those transporting illegally-cut logs. "If they are suspected to be illegally-cut logs, make the necessary arrests," she told military and police officials present during the briefing.

She said those caught transporting illegal logs could be arrested even without the presence of Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel.

Under present regulations, only DENR personnel can confiscate illegal logs and charge their owners in court.

Ms. Arroyo earlier made an aerial survey of the destruction caused by the recent typhoons and flash floods in Nueva Ecija.

She said she was very saddened by what she saw here and in Zaragoza, Aurora, when she visited the area on Thursday.

She said she was aghast to learn that the forest devastation in the area was not caused only by logging companies but also by people engaged in timber poaching.

Timber poaching, which is carried out by people paid by financiers engaged in illegal logging, is called "sacadas logging."

As the President appeared antilogging to illegal loggers and timber poachers, she showed motherly concern for victims of the recent calamities here and in the Bicol region.

A TREE is left alone in the rearmost of the destruction wrought on Barangay Bag in Infanta, Quezon, by logging

In Gabaldon town which she also visited, she assured the victims of government help in rebuilding their homes and farms. She said the government had enacted relief operations on Dec. 31 and would next give assistance to the victims.

The President told the victims that she visited them on Christmas Eve not only to bring Christmas cheer but also to extend the message of hope for a better tomorrow.

"May bagong pag-asa, bagong bukas at mas magandang kinabukasan para sa pagsapit ng bagong bukas (There's new hope, new life, and you will be given assistance for the building of your houses)," she said in her brief message in Tagalog.

Asked about her reaction to surveys and comments on the sad state of affairs, particularly about the economy she said what is happening today is a result of decades of too much reliance of the country on debts which are now being repaid.

She said the country is deep in debt and cannot fully move on.

Baguio cooks up gimmicks to attract tourists

BAGUIO CITY—Metropolitan's has probably driven the final nail on Baguio tourism's coffin, at least for 2005. But eyesores don't will not take it lying down.

Boat rentals at Burnham Lake, one of the most visited spots of this 95-year-old American-built city, have dropped from P60 an hour to P30 for a 30-to-40-minute (until you drop) package.

"We want visitors to feel at home again. Burnham Park is where lovers meet, where marriages are made, where children (of landlocked provinces in Northern Luzon) first encounter boats, "Nilwa, a monumental boat rental pitchman, said.

Near the lake, enterprising commercial photographers have been deserting dramatic touches from Mt. Province. Lily Dalon and Pampanga as a three-year-old St. Bernard named Bertie, who amiably poses with children for P60 a shot.

Bertie, the dog's owners said Bertie has been a profitable investment for Burnham Park enterprises, which have been watching a slump since the Baguio Flower Festival last year.

A Department of Tourism report showed tourist arrivals dropped by 22 percent from January to November this year. But it is a trend that has been plaguing the summer capital since 2000, according to Jose Gonzaga, a DOT Cordillera tourism officer.

Hotels reported only 25,000 bookings in November, compared to the 61,000 bookings in 79 facilities in November last year, DOT records showed.

BOATS await tourists at Burnham Lake in Baguio City. Operators are trying to attract visitors by charging P30 for a boat ride for an unlimited period compared to P60 per hour before.

Most guests, who were attending conventions in the city, backed out when the Department of Health confirmed a meningococcemia outbreak that had claimed 11 lives as of this week.

The decline of tourist arrivals has been attributed to Baguio's urban decay.

"There's nothing new to offer tourists (except the cool weather), and our parks still need some sprucing up," Gonzaga said.

City Hall engineers admit that the city's routine upkeep has been obstructed by financial and operational problems. Baguio's major traffic light grids are not working, compounding the heavy traffic jams that regularly hit downtown.

Burnham Lake only started drawing back tourists in September, after Mayor Braulio Bautista complained to the Department of Public Works and Highways that it had connected a sewer pipe to the lake's rainwater drain.

Mismanagement has hastened the city's plunging rance somehow by November, when tourism normally picks up, Gonzaga said. Baguio's most profitable tourism periods are during the Christmas holidays and Holy Week.

Based on tourism booking reports from 60 percent of January's hotels and inns, tourists had consistently slid down, except in April, she said.

Cordillera recorded 620,000 tourists from January and November, a tic cry from the region's 832,000 tourists from January to December in 2003. Florante Calbreas, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

41, mostly kids, hurt in firecracker blasts in Cebu, Iloilo, Leyte

CEBU CITY—At least 41 persons, including children, were brought to different hospitals in Cebu, Iloilo and Leyte due to blast injuries during the Christmas revelry.

Of the number, 16 were from three cities in Cebu—Cebu, Mandaue and Lapulapu. Two were in Tacloban City, Leyte, and one was in Iloilo.

Among those hurt were Diego Vergara, 31, and his two-year-old son, Nikko, who were brought to the Cebu City Medical Center for blast injuries to their hands.

Vergara, of Barangay Labangon in Cebu City, said his son picked up a lighted firecracker while playing in their yard on Christmas Eve.

Vergara said he was trying to take the firecracker from his son when it exploded.

A staffer of the Department of Health in Central Visayas said they could not tell if the number of blast victims in Cebu had increased or decreased because their office was still gathering data from other hospitals.

In Iloilo, Jane Andrea Gale, 2, was brought to the Western Visayas Medical Center for treatment of bruises she suffered after a firecracker exploded near her.

In Iloilo, only one case was reported, compared to the six blast injury cases treated at the government-run hospital in the previous year's Christmas Day celebration.

In Leyte, two blast victims were brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center in Tacloban City. They were Noah Jay Cadion, 11, of Tacloban, and Aiden Hong, 20, of Mahaplag town.

Ligaya Acosta, DOH information officer in Eastern Visayas, said the number was lower compared to the seven blast victims reported last year.

A policeman and a member of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology were held for firing their guns.

SO1 Roy Jamac, a member of the Mobile Patrol Group, was arrested by his colleagues for firing his gun at around 4 a.m. in Upper Basayan, Cebu City.

The MPG also arrested JO1 Gilbert Tamon, 27, and a BJMP member in Consolacion town in Cebu, for firing at the bank of the Guadalupe Church in Cebu City at about 3:10 a.m. yesterday.

The husband of a retired policewoman was killed after he accidentally shot himself on Christmas Eve in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

Diosdado Sedente had an argument with his wife, retired SPO4 Nelly Sedente, at about 10:30 p.m. inside their home at Cuvin Hagnaya in Barangay Tabora an—

Nelly locked herself in their room. Apparently irked, Sedente tried to open the door by hitting the doorknob with the butt of a .38-cal. M2 carbine rifle. The firearm went off and the bullet hit Diosdado in the head. Maureen Papadlacan, Rosine B'Angay Jr., Joey A. Gallaite and Gerlie P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

Judge's Xmas break leaves chaos between workers, contractor

IBAJI, Benguet—A judge's untimely Christmas break has left residents furious as disgruntled employees of a contractor for the rehabilitation of the Halsema Highway are free to get pieces of heavy equipment here.

Judge Restituto Gabaque of the regional trial court in La Trinidad town went on Christmas leave on Dec. 13 even as Antimo employees and subcontractors of Francis Sombrio Construction Corp. (FSCC) filed separate third-party claims for the equipment left by the firm.

The owner of the property in Barangay here, where the pieces of equipment were left, also asked for the restitution of the debt left by FSCC.

But Gwenne Dalagan failed to act on their claims, the FSCC was able to get equipment from the storeyard of the Dawson Engineering and Construction Corp. in Baguio, Benguet.

Angry residents set up barrifice on the tracks of FSCC and threatened to burn trailers, but the Manila-based firm was still able to bring out a backhoe, a bulldozer, an air compressor and a power generator.

Sixty-six former employees of FSCC based here said the company failed to pay their 'fractal 3rd salary bonuses and Philhealth premiums.

FSCC was dismissed by Dawson for nonperformance, after completing only 25 percent of what was expected of it. The firm also owed Dawson P78 million.

The 66 employees, in their joint third-party claims, said the equipment left by FSCC should be given to them as payment for their claims.

"Since FSCC is a contractor based in Metro Manila, its only asset that we know of is the equipment left along Halsema Highway. We are entitled to the possession of the equipment until such time that our wages and benefits are fully settled," they said.

John Sangki, owner of the property in Barangay, said FSCC's accumulated claims had reached P200,000.

FSCC's subcontractors also filed separate third-party claims against FSCC on Dec. 23. They said FSCC did not pay them their retention fees. Their total claims reached more than P800,000.

They said they wanted to possess FSCC's equipment until the company paid their fees.

In two instances in October, FSCC employees, accompanied by members of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, stormed the Dawson storeyard and took almost P35 million worth of equipment. Frank Cimaru, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

INQUIRER Mindanao

Groups alert Mindanao folk to scam

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Davao City

VARIOUS entities in Mindanao, including those in the government, have warned the public not to fall prey to a group that offers attractive packages and promises of economic development.

That group calls itself Kooperatibo Ekonomiya and Development Council Inc., or Bedco.

The information gathered and documents obtained by the Inquirer show that Bedco, which claims a membership base of about 500,000, has been operating for years now, offering its packages with juicy salary rates in exchange for free farm equipment. The money would allegedly be used in processing bio-fuel for fuel-production of profit.

The group also promises to undertake projects worth millions of pesos including those for public health, livelihood and education.

And some people in the devastated Surigao island have taken to the bait.

Sources said the people behind Bedco could have already raked in millions of pesos (at least from their collected membership) yesterday.

High salaries

In North Cotabato, the group offered an accounting graduate an P15,000 monthly salary—plus perks and allowances—for a supervisory job.

The applicant, whose older relative was offered a much higher position with P36,000 take-home pay plus car, paid P200 in a processing fee.

A security guard, also in North Cotabato, was promised a P13,000 monthly salary.

In Davao City, a cab driver applied for the position as a driver and as a municipal coordinator. As a feeder driver, he was promised a P10,000 monthly salary and P30,000 a month if he gets the municipal coordinator post. The cab driver paid a processing fee of P800.

A check with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) office in Davao City said Bedco was incorporated on May 23, 1995, as a contract corporation with registration number CS199900875. It is headed by a Daisy Salik Balinggo, with principal office at Plaza 26, Tirona Street, Bacolod, Mintac, Davao City.

Documents obtained by the Inquirer also showed that the group has a Manila office, which serves as its base national headquarters. Its address: c/o Vineyard Inn (Link Taft from NL), 34 ISP Road, Bonanza Hills, Quezon City.

Donations?

Carmelo Toledo, Bedco's chairman for Mindanao, said they never collected money from their members. She told radio station dxRD in Kidapawan City that the money they collected from the applicants were not compulsory fees, but donations.

"We don't have funds for institution. The money that was collected was used for the follow-up of the release of our money," she said.

Balicasan described his collection of fees as "contract and part of the procedure in every BGD or development foundation."

Sandra Rodriguez, SEC Metro Ismag Division Head, said the nature of Bedco's registration does not permit the group to recruit people for employment.

As a nonstock corporation, Bedco's articles of incorporation indicate that the group is only allowed to accept economic aid, donations, grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance from both foreign and local institutions, she said.

To prevent persons, as indicated in the articles of incorporation, to undertake the implementation of socioeconomic development programs designed to alleviate the standard of living of the Bangsamoro inhabitants in Mindanao.

Also, it is to serve as a conduit of the government in its various socioeconomic development endeavors in Mindanao through donations, grants and loans that would come from the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the World Islamic Bank.

Scam

"We get inquiries from many people already. These people claimed that Bedco collected money from them in exchange for certain positions with very high salaries enough to reimburse their investments," Rodriguez said.

Atty. Godofredo Darunday, IBC officer in charge, said they still have to receive complaints. It was those who were reportedly swindled.

"If you can prove that they went out of what they were supposed to do, it would be possible that their certificate would be revoked," Darunday said.

Despite its legal status, the government sent Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) repeatedly rang the alarm against Bedco's activities.

And it did the Young Movers Professionals Network Inc. (YMPN) and Mindanaleo, two of Mindanao's prominent Bangsamoro groups.

Sultanate Impgil, YMPN president, said there is much reason for the entire Bangsamoro community to be offended by the group's use of the term Bangsamoro.

"It is very disrespectful and insulting ... We urge the group to stop capitalizing on the impoverished condition of the Moro people. They must stop using 'Bangsamoro' as a token of money-making ventures," Nasheron Bagindawan, Mindanaleo secretary general, said.

Bedco documents show that on Aug. 23, the group sent President Macapagal-Arroyo a letter asking her to do something for the release of the fund for proposed livelihood projects for the "indigenous of the Bangsamoro people in the socio-depressed areas in Mindanao, amounting to $7.3 billion through Dr. Ahmed Mohammad Ali, president of the Islamic Development Bank Ltd. (IDB), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

Billions

Another letter, also signed by Balicasan, was requesting the President to "intercede and expedite the release of funds in the amount of $200 (the OIC/IDB or the amount of $200 billion (and/or $7.5 billion) which will be deposited in PNB Davao account number 301-830995-3."

"The financial assistance is envisaged to be used for, but not be exclusively used for livelihood, development, housing, agro-industrial and educational," the letter signed by Balicasan said.

Bids Sans Arkilan, the group's executive director for the Bangsamoro People in Southern Mindanao, said their Muslim sibling homeowned a firm, Elly Construction.

Guerrero, he said, is "realtor as influenced in Mindanao."

The business success in the Palace said there was no Government-to-Government.

In Montenegro, Medco's chief economic development specialist, said they have been receiving inquiries about Bedco and its affiliates with Bedco.

"It seems to us that Bedco is not in any way, formally or informally, associated with Medco and therefore, all its activities and transactions are not sanctioned by Medco or by any bureau, government agency, entity or foreign donor organization/agency," Montenegro said.

Montenegro said the only transaction Medco had with Bedco was when the agency received letters from the group requesting the endorsement of the group to various government offices. The proposals have since been referred back to Bedco by Amber validation and authentication, he said.

"Please be forewarned. Let us not take the strong down. Already, we have lost our homeland, do we allow the identity of the Moro to be trampled as well?" Sangki added.

With reports from Joselle Rodillo, Phil Abdulmajan Barroso

GIRLS in jute, bida, play native instruments for the arrival of US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone. The US government and various other groups provide funds for Mindanao projects, but an alarm has been put out for a group calling itself Bedco which is running out with a scam.

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New system of learning adopted for tribes

By Germelina Lacorte
Davao City

LEADERS of over 47 indigenous tribes nationwide are fighting to save their dying culture by helping put up alternative schools that seek to strengthen their way of life.

As the first batch of graduates leave elementary in the next few years, tribal leaders like Rigoberto Enos Tony Lumandog of Bukidnon's Manobo look forward to sending a similar Indigenous People's school just up.

In his town, the Rigoberto way of life is fading fast. Most of the Rigoberto schools speak the settlers' language (Binisaya) and not adopting the natives' way of life.

"Most of the children even grow up ashamed of their own tradition," said Benny Cumalong, also a Rigoberto, in Malaybalay, Bukidnon province of Mindanao.

"It's only in indigenous schools like the School of Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom (Ishiwi) that our children begin to appreciate who we have," says Lumandog in a tribal leaders forum here recently.

Native learning

Instead of typical schoolteachers who rely heavily on Western-oriented textbooks, Ishiwi teachers are tribal youths themselves who share oral learning from tribal wise men, elders and big bosses (datus/pintados or panimuays) in their own communities, according to Al Fadam, executive director of the Davao Consortium of its Peoples' Cultures (ACPC).

Ishiwi currently runs 12 elementary schools in different tribal communities nationwide, from the Tboli of Lake Sebu to the Higaonons (pilgrimage Oriental and the Aetas and so on. Pandales nevertheless stressed that the Ishiwi schools are not exclusive to tribal students, he said.

"Education is [too] difficult to be left in the hands of the few," said Fadam, who believes that the Department of Education's curriculum could now answer the educational needs of the tribes, as it has demanded the preservation of cultures of education is closely linked to their unresolved unrelated domain claims.

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) enacted in 1997, empowers tribes get to protect their own customs and beliefs within claim ancestral domains.

"In each tribal community, the Ishiwi curriculum is designed to suit the needs of the people," Fadam said. "The government is to align the IP curriculum for them only dictates the very concept of indigenous education."

Increasing population

At present, Ishiwi serves over 700 students nationwide, but this number is expected to reach 2,500 in two years, said Fadam.

"We plan to set up at least four Ishiwi schools in each of the country's 47 provinces, which have non-indigenous people surrounding," he said.

In the future, the indigenous schools will create as part of Department of Education, would have their own language and rich heritage, and give what they learned back to the people, Fadam said.

The local government shoulders 60 percent of the cost of each Ishiwi school project, while the ACPC shoulders 40 percent.

Funds are now being raised for the first Ishiwi high school that will be set up to serve as the first batch of Ishiwi graduates leave elementary school in the next two years, Fadam said.

Lumandog said the "dominant culture" of the settlers in Bukidnon made it difficult to preserve IP and other forms of stone tombs are chipping his son's tribe of their own way of life.

"Some of our children, who feel different, are ashamed of what they are," he said.

Facing extinction

Like the Ifugao, the Bagobo, the Manobo and the Bukidnon, the Higaonons are among the country's 110 ethnic tribes whose customs and traditions are being researched, according to ACPC.

Yet, from the country's colonial and national systems into the IP children's feeling of alienation, with its English language textbooks and the different culture that the system brings.

"You cannot expect all IP children to be mainstreamed," Fadam said.

"In South Cotabato, for instance, where the dominant language is Ilonggo, a Tboli girl has to translate her thoughts from Tboli to Ilonggo when the entire school. Then, she has to translate her thoughts again to Tagalog and English when she opens her textbooks. Language shifts and the sole basis of intelligence," Samora said.

"On top of this, our Tboli student has to deal with town culture in school totally different from the one she finds at home," he said.

As a result, they don't do well. He says, the Ishiwi schools are the indigenous peoples' language as the medium of instruction, says Samora.

In Lake Sebu, for instance, students are learning things in their own Tboli language, and with it, the whole set of tribal rituals and practices that grow up with it, says Nelly Bolotaolo, who is in charge of the Lake Sebu Ishiwi school.

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Sunday BIZ

Business Features Editor
Margie Quiroga-Kapitan

Swiss uses his ear, finds RP a haven of talents for venture

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

BEHRINGER equipment bear the stamp of Filipino ingenuity.

ULTIMATE IRONGER wants to get production and audio equipment within reach of musicians.

WHEN national UR Behringer grew up in a house where curving edge technology and snow came together like his favorite Italian pizza.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that when the founder of the world's 10th biggest pro-audio equipment manufacturer wanted space that suddenly soundproof, it's the Philippines, the 40-year-old Behringer decided to stay and set up a business.

It was the music first that lured the just-losing Behringer to visit the country in 2001, after living for eight long, hard years in Hong Kong that left him burned out and semi-retired.

Behringer described those years as his most intense experiment in his life, and his solo source of fun was his Sunday jam sessions with Filipino friends at (a fine the Mandarin Oriental) the (a Heart's Champagne Bar.

He always went home from those sessions exhilarated and with a growing admiration for the talents of the locals.

Behringer, a classically trained pianist with a degree in sound engineering, then spent the next two years enticing the Philippines to continue jamming with those Filipino friends and musicians.

But it was not until this year, when he met a friend who was in the electronics business, that he realized that music was not the sole talent of the Filipinos. They were as good in engineering.

With that realization came the idea to tap that depth of engineering talent to accelerate the growth of his pro-audio company that bears his name.

"Now I'm not knowing about the talent. I just started with just four to five employees to do simple jobs like graphic design," Behringer says.

Now over the next nine months, we grew the company here to such that we tripled the engineers in Germany. How, say, "If Filipinos engineers dream, many of the products that we sell in over 120 countries," he adds.

The first product was an electric guitar and accompanying amplifier that is sold in the market for just about P6,000, says Filipino engineers are now busy putting the finishing touches to an affordable digital piano and digital drums.

"In a nutshell, it was always my dream to make music available to everybody, to make equipment available so that musicians can pursue their passions, and (in this business, it is all about passion," Behringer says.

It was this passion that led Behringer to set up his company in 1989 in Germany, where he took up classical piano and sound engineering.

He, however, wants to begin, tinge in 1996, in his living room, where he tried to build his own professional audio recording equipment since the ones available in the market were so expensive.

Building equipment from scratch is not new to the music engineer as many days of his childhood were spent helping his father build the world's first wireless-remotely-controlled toy guns.

Behringer spent countless hours of his college years listening and improving on his digital mixers until he was satisfied with the results.

When his friends got so unable to digital mixers, they asked him to sell him a similar piece of equipment. He, then, traded up selling off his first production run of 25.

Two years later and armed with a million dollars, he decided to scale the manufacturing of professional audio equipment "and a twice the features at half the price" his life's calling.

Behringer credits the father of his business girlfriend, who was a top executive of a food company, for helping him lay the right foundation for his company.

"He was my source and investment for the 1 year. I remember he took me to work in the office and shared with me the basics of the business. He outlines to watch out, bond tools, grow organically and go easy on credit," Behringer says.

He now has hired studios up to engineering has now employed, but he kept those principles taught to me of Germany's lowest door to his house.

Behringer adds that it was this attitude who encouraged him to put his name to this company.

"He asked me, do you believe in your company?" When I told yes, of course, he said then, I should put my name on it. Look at the biggest companies, he said, they all bear the founder's names," he says.

That name is now known to the music circles to among the most aggressive in the business.

Behringer also used the ear as its logo in the business was a the basic one of that product sound.

Thus, this tagline "Just listen."

From the 20 digital consoles that he sold to his friends, Behringer pro-audio equipment is now available in over 120 countries. It was one of the first to cash in on the benefits of moving the production facility to China to cut on costs. Employees number 3,000, and growing.

Behringer also owns the hang mess benefits of his decision to move one of the research and development centers to the Philippines.

"I want to have as many engineers as we can. We are looking at having as many as 200 more employees and, you, We are proud to say that many of the products that we are made by Filipinos, for the Filipinos," Behringer says.

He said one of the benefits of having Filipinos in the R&D is Filipino engineers use the equipment themselves.

It is not unusual to see Filipino engineers strumming their guitar with their fingers at the Behringer Philippines office in Makati, and are tapping until they were satisfied that they are the electric pan for and the amplifier just right.

"Most Filipino engineers are musicians, too. That is why they know perfectly what to do with (the equipment," Bella Ingles says.

Filipinos, after all, have high standards and are known to music.

And it's not the electric guitar and amplifier Filipino engineers have done research and development for loudspeakers—from small computer speakers to giant 2,000-watt speakers—to be installed in nightclubs and lighting equipment.

Next year, we will be producing digital pianos for just $4,000," Bella Ingles says.

Behringer says he could sell his products at a fraction of the cost of the companies' because his company owns the supply chain—from the R & D to manufacturing and distribution, and there is no middle-man profit.

"We also save labor features, so the customer we sell," Behringer says.

Behringer says the company will be going at a more rapid pace next year as most assets comes to the developed world demand recording equipment they could set up in their own homes.

And if Behringer will have his say, these homes will have Behringer equipment with the stamp of Filipino engineering excellence.

China's yuppies say 'I do' to diamonds

BEIJING—China's blushing brides-to-be follow simple rules when choosing their diamond rings.

"The bigger, the better, of course!" said Mei Yi, a Beijing professional, sitting down with her fiancee for a day of comparison and agony at a jewelry store in the capital.

The fact that diamonds symbolize a lifetime of love has taken root in China, a country that traditionally prefers gold and pale, red silver precious stones over unimaginable luxuries like diamonds.

Driven by savvy advertising from South Africa's De Beers and a booming middle class, China has enabled into third place in worldwide diamond jewelry consumption after the United States and Japan, according to the Diamond Administration of China.

"Maybe it's because I've been influenced by Western ideas, but diamond rings are really popular," Yi said. "It's become normal for every year Chinese to buy them when getting married."

The China market should overtake Japan within ten years, and sold also become the world's second-biggest cutting center after India, De Beers estimates.

Most Chinese can't afford a flawless stone set in white gold or platinum, but the sheer number of potential buyers is enough to draw investment from South African, Israeli and Belgian firms.

"Japan, for the diamond business, is yesterday. America is today, but now they take a big percent. But I think China will be tomorrow," said Ido Steinberg, China chair of Michael Diamonds, a partner of Cape Investment Trading.

The British Market recently consumers about 42 percent of world's diamond jewelry, compared to 11 percent for Japan and nine percent for China, he said.

Diamond boom

The domestic diamond jewelry market, worth about $1.2 billion last year, is expected to grow between 15 percent and 20 percent in 2004, according to official figures.

The annual growth in China is staggering, but the wholesale market is dominated by De Beers, 45-per cent owned by mining conglomerate Anglo American.

De Beers, blamed for cartels for what they call unfair pricing policies, has been selling diamonds in China for industrial use since the 1950s. Some 80 percent of all diamonds are used in cutting or drilling tools.

But China's market for technical diamonds—used in energy conversion and medical applications—is relatively small, it between Petroleum Times (30.1 million tons) and 40 million tons (19.7 million) a year, with the growth, executives say.

In case production of diamonds is rare, as it relies on imports. Analysts say China last year didn't the same path as the world diamond market that is expected to grow between 15 percent and 20 percent in 2004, according to official figures.

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Fledgling industry

China set up the Shanghai Diamond Exchange in 2000 to ensure demand, but diamonds remain only trading has been slow-old since its launch, with the vast majority of rough stones smuggled into the country to avoid high taxes.

The exchange said it traded 889.8 million of diamonds in the first quarter.

Similarly, a 17 percent value-added tax has fueled efforts to create a diamond cutting factories and Michael Diamonds' Liu.

Most of the diamonds now are cut in India, home for Belgians.

More than 20,000 people work in the diamond polishing in China, with an annual output of three million stones, De Beers estimates. China's official wholesale market in polished stones was worth $377 million in 2003, it says.

De Beers is increasingly eyeing up to China in order to reduce its dependence on diamond processing giant, India, analysts say.

"China is already the world's biggest jewelry consumer-boasting center. I think it will take us about 15 years to catch up with India," (second, against the tide of workers) lamenting and polishing rings.

Michael Diamonds plans to set up a cutting center with several hundred workers, attracted by diamond workers' wages of just $80 to $120 a month.

Perfect fit

In 120 diamond jewelry (jeans's rank, 50 million) (not (20 million) Asian flagship store in Beijing, diamonds are in plus (more on the floors of the shop.

Most customers are couples looking for wedding rings, but there's no shortage of people buying as gifts for themselves.

"When we looked around Asia to open our first store, we pinpointed China as the place with the fastest growth," Jerry Ho, vice general manager of Galaxy China, told Reuters.

Luxury jewelers Cartier, a unit of Richemont, Bulgari SpA and LVMH are looking to expand in the Chinese market.

Cartier first to from Paris in the of the South, a 120 carat diamond mined in Brazil in 1985, for the opening of its new China flagship store on Shanghai's bustle. Brand watches on the mainly. Reuters

Couple retires, creates health and beauty in a farm

By Maurice Malanes
INQuirer Lucena Bureau

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Retirement. In many people, mean sitting on their rocking chairs or their contraptions or what-nots. Then.

But for lawyer Ramon Benguet and wife Lourd or Bing, retirement is an opportunity to do exactly what they had dreamed of doing when they were tied to their 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. jobs.

"Not death on a rocking chair and your mind and member get atrophied. You should continue to be productive (your in retirement)," says Benguet, a retired executive vice president of the John Hay Management Corp. and former president of the John Hay Poro Point Development Corp.

Retirement is an auspicious time to launch one's second or third career, says Bing, a retired director of the Institute of Physical Education and former acting director of the Center for Culture and the Arts at the Saint Louis University in Baguio City.

For the couple, retirement is a chance to do anything in the world, like traveling overseas, which they did and continue to do.

After having seen much of the world, the Benguets feel they must leave some worthwhile legacy from their community.

From the couple's desire to leave a legacy and make an innovative business dent in their village, Benguet Farms, which was named after their homegrown brand, was conceived.

An experience

Benguet Farms, 7 km north of Baguio City along The Halsema Highway, here to turn just a business proposition. It is "a consume-only-food-in-its-experience," says Benguet.

As an experience, clients or guests do not only munch on fresh organic vegetable salads, roasts and desserts that were from fifteen-minute to various specialties such as morning glory, various varieties of tomato, onion, basil, of pandan, mint, dahlias, geraniums, marigold, angel's trumpet, cauliflower, and orchids.

On a friend's all 200-square-meter area, farm animals like chickens, ducks, pigs and rabbits live together.

Above the naturally dry is a fishpond, which will be filled with tilapia fingerlings when the rains come in May or June next year.

Part of the experience in Benguet Farms is not just dining, but also working through the vegetable and strawberry patches, feeding the animals, fertilizing in plant and asking questions about organic farming and its business side. Farmers can also enjoy some relaxation here over tea or Benguet coffee under a pine tree.

Business sense

The dining area and a mini-trade center, featured a red-painted carwash-roofed structure beside the Halsema Highway, used to be a shabby store repair shop with screen doors and sink and where grasses and other vegetables were processed with spoiled oil and gasoline.

Since the lot on which the former store repair shop stood is the entrance to the Benguets' property the Benguets evaluated the owner to lose the lot to them. With a makeover, the place has made a difference along a highway where shops and stalls do not seem to last about flowers and grasses.

Ramon Benguet is like a charming host, mind really writes. This is not surprising because Benguet is an ex-emcee and his wife is an artist and both of them love and cultivate flowers, trees and vegetables.

As a former Camp John Hay official, Benguet conceived the Pamphlangan or the Baguio Flower Festival, an innovation that has become a tradition, and which helps even income for the Baguio City government and for the business sector.

Such innovation is reflected in Benguet Farms, where the wide-ladders are not only the Benguets but the whole neighborhood as well.

Farmers from neighborhood farms like Bernie's Garden, Jalopy's Garden & Pets, Dominic Farms, and Lourdes and Terry sell their products in the Benguet Farms' trade center.

To free the guests/paying customers Ernie creates pictures, the Benguets did not organize rental for the use of stalls. The farmers-vendors can give the Benguets 10 percent of their gross sales.

"This is a fair arrangement as it allows vendors here to work and leaving to pay rent during the busy season," says Benguet.

"If they sell good, (here everybody is happy. If they don't, everybody is sad, but at least there's still is here."

Making pot

Benguet Farms is also emerging as a melting pot of many organic products and talents.

Eduardo Gomez, a retired Mindanao Administration official and an in-law of the Benguets, and his wife would usually bring in dried seafood from Lubuagan City and shares crafts from their hometown to Bontoc, Mtn. Province.

Cordillera textile also emerges these artworks such as paintings, bead necklaces and wristbands, cards, wall dresses and other souvenir items. Based on appointments, these artists can teach their craft to learn interested.

Igorot knitters and weavers also trade their high-quality sweaters and other clothing.

Tonya Farms, which opened in November, continues to evolve as it seeks to make a difference in doing business.

And if the Benguets insist on shepherd theme, sentiment, it is because other human are involved.

"More importantly, we are not just farmers. We are friends and neighbors as well," says Benguet.

Such friendliness and neighborliness, which cannot be valued in monetary terms, are indeed among the treasures (items and guests get to appreciate at Tonya Farms.

A GARDEN patch, which forms part of the ambiance at Tonya Farms, 7 km north of Baguio City.

LAUREL "Bing" Benguet consumes with her former at Tonya Farms.

PINOY ENTREPRENEUR

Satisfying the Pinoy sweet tooth for 40 years

LIKE a treasured heirloom that is handed down from one generation to the next, the secret pudding-like butter recipe of Ilocano "Lolo Inggong" Sevilla is now in the hands of the third generation who keeps the legacy of Sevilla Sweets going until each day.

Now operated by granddaughter Gemma Sevilla-Sweetnam, family-owned Sevilla Sweets continues to indulge the Filipinos' sweet tooth with pastillas de leche and other confections that are inevitably and distinctly Pinoy.

According to Abanilla, their products are popular with the locals and holiday-ers. Sales peak during Christmas season and in August.

"That's the end of summer season in western countries when holidaymakers board Sevilla Sweets' products before going back abroad."

To meet demand for their sweets, the company put up stores in Metro Manila. Flagship is in San Miguel, Bulacan, while five branches are in Shangri-La Mall, Mandaluyong City; Robinsons Galleria, Quezon City; Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan; Sta. Lucia East, Cainta; and the newly opened Market! Market! in Bonifacio.

As proof of its product quality and popularity, Sevilla Sweets was specially handpicked by the Japanese Imperial Trade and Industry Government Bureau at the Rotta Market in Shinkori Market!

Sweet beginnings

Like most flourishing enterprises, Sevilla Sweets' beginnings of humble beginnings that brought forth success.

"Back in the '60s, Lolo Inggong started a coffee concession with fresh carabao's milk, the essence of which he used in preparing his own recipe of pastillas de leche. She owned a sari-sari store a market located along the old national road," Abanilla related. The sultry confection became a hit, and Lolo Inggong had to increase his output to satisfy customers demands.

After some years her family was forced to relocate to an area near the present national road—a move evidently that turned to be a blessing in disguise.

With no more than P70 in his pocket, Abanilla's father—the former San Miguel Mayor Jaime Jr. Sevilla—renamed the family's small pastillas business. What began as a small shop in the capital their had the Sevilla's engagement with penny pinching and hard work until the business grew.

"My parents used to say that the secret of her love-life, the most their business sequences," the added.

The relocation proved to be a positive twist. Their customers have expanded, picked up by tourist interests from Manila (answering questions and North Luzon provinces going to Manila From Manila, the family had to put up a bigger store and kitchen.

As the years rolls these people, all family, were engaged in the business. Now they have 32 cousins, aunts and 15 other people at the store. Working in shifts, production of sweets only ceases two days in the year, on Good Friday and Christmas Day.

Other sweet variations

Brand Lolo Inggong's pastillas, the family's product line expanded to include other Pinoy favorites and both of them too: cookies/flowers, buns and ingredients.

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INQUIRER correspondent Rico Hizon's 2006 Most Outstanding Kapampangan awardee for Media. Hizon carries BBC World's Asia Business Report. He is a graduate of journalism of De La Salle University. Poses (seven Rico, with Melanie Syquia, Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid, and Jane and Lawrence Hizon, Rico's parents.

"If WE do not take care of the sea, the livelihood would be over. We should not only take it for the environment, we should also protect it," states Maximo Macaraig, 57, one of the biggest names in the aquaculture business in Pangasinan.

Fish cage pioneer asks operators to take better care of the sea

By Yolanda Sarola-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—"The aquaculture industry is considered environmentally hazardous, but the pioneers of fish cage operations in the country said the industry will not harm the environment if operators take care of the sea."

"It's all a matter of taking care of the sea, and that means taking care of the soil in the seabed," Maximo Macaraig, 57, one of the biggest names in the aquaculture business in Pangasinan.

Macaraig, an agriculture graduate of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and who introduced the fish cage technology to the country in 1991, has been commuting his fellow aquaculture operators to "invest a little in taking care of the sea because it is the source of our livelihood."

"If we do not take care of the sea, the livelihood would be over. We should not only take from the environment, we should also protect it," Macaraig said.

He cited an example what happened in 2002 when a massive fish kill hit Bolinao town because of pollution caused by the aquaculture industry itself.

He was heavily affected by the fishkill.

How did he do it?

"By following certain systems and using certain products that protect the soil," Macaraig said, adding that he practices "demand feeding," says "nutritional feeds" and applies "good bacteria" on the seabed/bottom like lubogan.

In 2002, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources pointed out that overfeeding Bangus (milkfish) stocks in the Bolinao coastal waters had resulted in the accumulation of decomposing materials in the seabed, causing widespread pollution that killed millions worth of bangus.

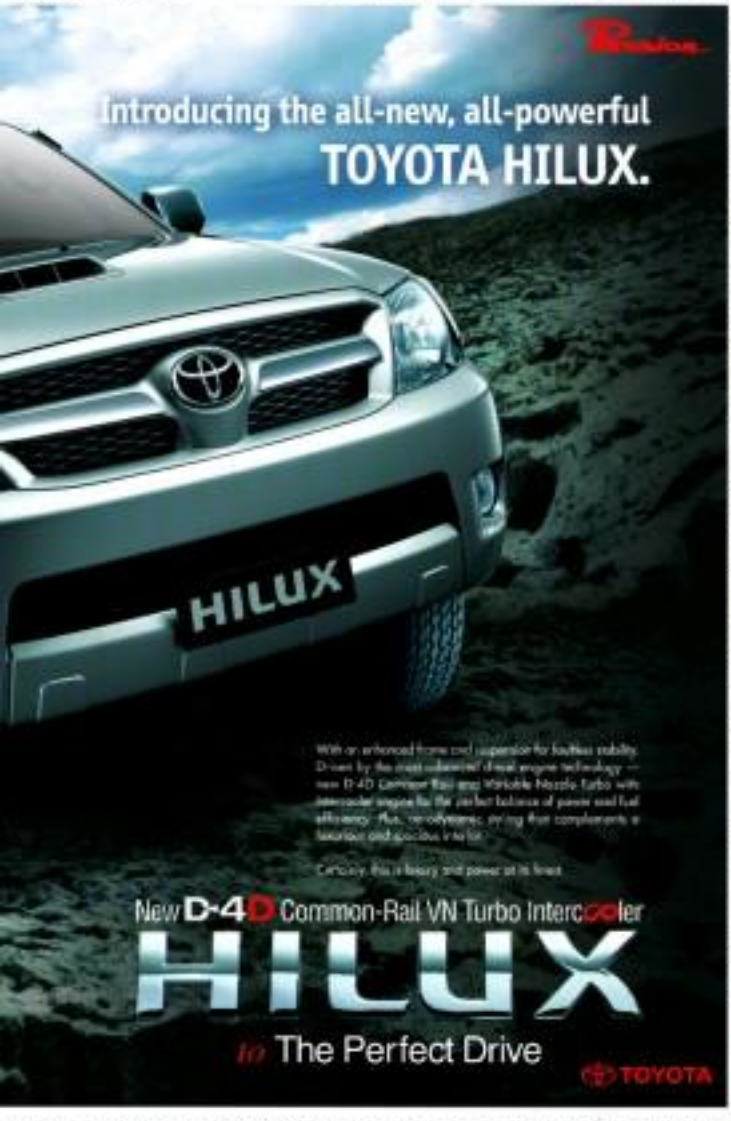
Most operators were too ready to use antibiotics or lobbyists, fish farmers, doctors and other professionals joined the bandwagon when the fish cage industry was at its peak.

"They put a convenient value [illegible] to invest about one billion [illegible] and [illegible] in the [illegible] seabed," he said.

Aquaculture practices "destroyed feeding ""Where the bangus once roaming, we stop giving feeds so [illegible] to prevent [illegible] accumulation in the seabed," he said.

He says "nutrified" feeds which are 200 percent cooked as compared to pellets which are 20-30 percent cooked.

"Because nutrified feeds is fully cooked, it is absorbed better by the fish. It has a higher protein content and it easily digestible which result to faster growth and bigger size of the bangus. Nutrified feeds also lessen the wastes from the bangus a vastly decomposed," he said.



Superbowl aims to double restos by next year

SUPER Bowl of China ends 2004 with three new branches, bringing its eight-year total number of its outlets. Super Bowl of China opened its newest branch at the Waterside in Greenhills, San Juan, a few days before the new year. This came just four months after the restaurant expanded its operation with the opening of two branches in August 2004.

Super Bowl of China-Greenhills covers 208 square meters with a seating capacity of 144 and offers a new choice in dining destination for the serious market segment around the place—families, students, students and executives in San Juan, Pasig and nearby areas. The location of the new branch is near malls shops and stores, cinemas, theaters and the famous Greenhills bazaars that is a year-round tourist destination.

Big Buddha Restaurants Inc. (BBRI) which operates Super Bowl of China and the Big Buddha Restaurant in Greenhills 3, Makati is targeting to open at least eight to nine more stores in 2005, or double the current number of its branches already, three new stores are scheduled to open next year in Gateway Mall, Cubao; Tomas Morato, Quezon City and in Blue Wave, Shaw Blvd.

BBRI managing director Richmond Tang believes this target is attainable given the strong following the restaurants enjoys and the success of the branches that opened this year.

Tang believes capturing strong and meaningful niches with the right partners is necessary to accelerate growth and expansion, hence in July 2004, it decided to open its doors to potential franchise partners—individuals or corporations, global or business minds within its existing groups, and its existing franchising, with these stores higher level of profitability and success rate compared to starting a new business. The Philippine franchising industry is one of the most developed in Asia, with prominent and fast food chains are leading franchising businesses due to the impressive growth of the food sector.

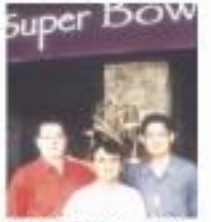
In July 2004, Super Bowl of China embarked on major activities meant to prepare its management and operations staff for the demands of franchising. Two major activities include orientation

Multinational marketing seminar to level up the franchising skills of key personnel and staff and its participation in the IT Franchise for Filipino exhibit sponsored by the Association of Filipino Franchisors Inc. (AFFI) held in July 2004.

After the successful launches in 168 Megamall, Jupiter Street in Makati City, Glorietta 4 of Ayala Center, Cloth Avenue in Festival Mall, Alabang, and at the beloved of San Juan North Edsa, Super Bowl of China's first franchise outlet opened in Eastwood City Walk 2 in Libis, Quezon City a week after, the second franchised outlet opened in Greenhills.

BBRI franchising could eventually penetrate regions, opening more branches is part of the company's commitment to bring the Super Bowl of China experience to as many people as possible. More franchisees strategic locations create convenience and many more for diners.

Sustaining public patronage is difficult yet as each task considering the number of restaurants being opened, each one offering outstanding new and interesting as diners. Super Bowl of China never fails to sustain public patronage with its varied delectable serving a super superb—and a clean combination of genre-mixing Chinese and Asian cuisine, big servings means for sharing, affordable pricing, warm and personal service exposes confusing Asian-western ambiance.



SUPER Bowl of China Restaurant's Robert Ipao, Richmond Tang and Lucy Yao.

No more 'knocking on doors and tapping on windows'

By Jerry R. Rosco

NOBODY wanted to apply for The Electrical Group when it first posted its job openings for sales people in 2001.

And nobody thought it was a job that would require one to "knock on your doors, ring up your bell, repair your windows too..."—an ad campaign in the '80s.

"We had to post another ad without our company name just to get applications. In 2001, we only had seven sales people in our organization," recalls Mr.Sol Lowenwarsh, president of Electrolux Philippines Inc.

After it stopped selling its products in the country in the late '90s, Electrolux came back in 2000 as part of its worldwide expansion.

Electrolux is the world's largest producer of personal appliances for kitchen, cleaning and outdoor use such as refrigerators, cookers, clean room and garden kitchen. More than 61 million Electrolux products are sold each year in more than 150 countries.

This time, however, there were no more sales people knocking on consumers' doors since Electrolux was relaunched in April 2002.

Instead, Electrolux products were made available for the first time, in most retail stores with Electrolux and White Westinghouse in its center brands.

After two and a half years, the company made a complete turnaround from the Electrolux people used to know.

Lowenwarsh says the performance of Electrolux has since been more than impressive.

"We have already achieved one of our short-term goals, which is to become one of the market leaders in this country," says Lowenwarsh.

Electrolux now has about 500 dealers nationwide and is expecting 2004 sales growth to hit six times its sales in 2002.

Its bestsellers are refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Refrigerators account for 75 percent of the company's total sales, with about 40,000 to 50,000 units sold this year.

One of the reasons for their success, according to Lowenwarsh, is having a strong brand.

Lowenwarsh explains that although the Philippine market is still young for some of its more-than-mature products, Electrolux, he believes that the market is continuously growing and that sales would soon pick up.

Another reason for our success is having better after sales services, particularly in product repairs, says Lowenwarsh.

He says that even before they started selling products in the country, they have been providing after-sales services to their clients.

Electrolux also provides necessary facilities for these services.

"What differentiates us from the rest is that we have all the spare parts readily available," says Lowenwarsh.

While it may take weeks or even months for common repairs of other brands, repairs of Electrolux appliances may only take a few days.

Lowenwarsh adds they provide adequate training to people in every authorized service center to ensure that products are handled well.

"Another key reason for our success is having well-trained personnel in our organization," says Lowenwarsh.

For three days, each personnel is trained about the organization and its products. He or she will then have an apology as on-the-job training before being assigned to an outlet.

But it does not end there, according to Lowenwarsh. Each month, there is an ongoing training for all personnel about product knowledge of both new and old products, as well as about "frequently-asked questions."

They are also given regular updates regarding current company situation and market assessments.

"We have to constantly tell-tell them necessary about all our products to ensure better service to customers," says Lowenwarsh.

Plans for 2005

As for 2005, Electrolux plans to expand its distribution to outside urban places in the Visayas region such as Tacloban and Dumaguete, and also in Northern Luzon, particularly in Ilocos Norte.

Lowenwarsh says the company wants to tap the smaller cities and the surrounding towns in these areas.

"We would like to increase our dealers by at least half (from the current of about 500) so that our sales in the provinces would match sales in Metro Manila," says Lowenwarsh.

To date, 60 percent of the sales come from Metro Manila, while 40 percent are from the provinces. Sales in our Metro Manila outlet is usually equivalent to sales of several outlets in the provinces.

Lowenwarsh adds consumers could expect more product innovations from the group.

They will then open new outlets, hire more people in the sales force and provide "professional" in each outlet.

A "professional," according to Lowenwarsh, is a sales person equipped with adequate training regarding Electrolux products. Each outlet has at least one professional to help it sell Electrolux products.

In line with this, Electrolux will be loading up its training for employees as employees will meet international standards and be at par with other Electrolux employees worldwide.

Not keen to take care of the people in the organization because they are the ones who drive the business, says Lowenwarsh.

He says cross-culture opportunities are highly possible for Filipinos. In fact, several of them have already been assigned to handle regional assignments.

Lowenwarsh additionally wants to hire "preloved employees" or the company of choice, which is evident right now as the headcount of applications they receive for each job posting they put up.

He stated that some of the applicants are already managers and high ranking officials in top multi-national firms.

LOOKING AHEAD: Having achieved one short-term goal, Electrolux now sets its sights in becoming the market leader in each country in the years to come.

Editor Chito Banal-Pertierra

How Christmas cards revive our forests

By Beemia C. Burgos

Lifestyle salutes the PBSP's project that raises funds for the greening of cities by printing and selling student-designed Yuletide cards

BECAUSE of creative ways to keep the donations coming, nonprofit foundations have kept their advocacies, especially now when corporations are rightfully, government funding is scarce and donors suffer from fatigue.

For a nonprofit corporate-led foundation such as the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), hard times call for enterprise and creativity. "It was in this light that the foundation implemented the Christmas Card Fund Campaign in 1993 to raise funds for the reforestation of Cebu Billy

(CONTINUED ON C2)

CHRISTMAS card designed by Mylene Stephanie J. Lucas, La Concepcion College (Bacolod)

IN THIS ISSUE

How Christmas cards revive our forests

From page C1

land and Bago Upland in the Visayas," says Isabel Montañola, PHEP chief of corporate communications.

To date, PHEP has generated more than P1 million by selling Christmas cards. The income has financed the planting of approximately 150,000 trees of different species and the rehabilitation of about 60 hectares of land.

The project won the 2002 Ateli Award of Merit by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines. This is all part of the PHEP's Cebu Mountain Watershed Management Program, which, aside from reforestation, provides marginal upland farmers with farm productivity technologies and ecosystem development training.

Christmas card

Every year, PHEP conducts a design-a-Christmas card contest among college students in Cebu and Bacolod. The winning designs are used as Christmas card covers.

Each card is 13.25 cm x 22.25 cm when spread. The PHEP logo, name and description of the foundation, and the identity of the artist are printed at the back. Each card costs P20 and every recipient of the card will have a tree planted in his name in PHEP's reforestation sites in the Visayas.

There are also card designs and customized texts for companies interested to have their exclusive Christmas cards. A company can buy a design for P10,000 and own the artwork originally submitted by the participating student. In addition, 500 trees will be planted in the purchasing company's name.

This year, the first-winning designs were by Rowena Dalida, University of Cebu; and Muriel Joy de la Serna, Jay-R Bellevia and Emil de la Cruz, all students of La Consolacion College in Bacolod. Other designs were done by Ivan Richard Delgado of the Don Carlos Seminary-College; Ms. Thesse de la Cruz; Jenbelle Magbanua, Mark Michael Cacalda, Mylene Stephanie Lacson, Jennelyn Magbanua, Hershey Limbo, Ronicon John Bayonita, Larissa del Cano and Shiao Jesse Sene Lumagdang, all of La Consolacion College in Bacolod; Jaylen Acevedo and Wesley Alonso Espina, University of the Philippines Cebu College; Michelle Bunong, University of San Carlos; Jennifer Belva, Cebu State College of Science and Technology; and Neil Gabriel Fugaro, Cebu Institute of Technology.

Three students were awarded cash prizes.

"This ongoing program hopes to increase the density of trees located in PHEP reforestation sites of Cebu Highland and Bago Upland in Negros Occidental," Montañola said.

PHEP was organized in 1973 by socially responsible business people as a response to the socioeconomic crises. The foundation has since been the corporate sector's vehicle in forging assistance to landless farmers, fisherfolk, rural workers, urban poor and indigenous cultural communities.

From an initial membership of 56 companies, PHEP has grown to more than 370 members. It has worked with some 1,000 partner organizations, and provided over P4.0 billion in financial assistance, which has supported more than 1,000 projects that have benefited close to 1.5 million poor Filipino households from 65 provinces.

Today, corporations are broadening their focus and taking responsibility for the condition of society. "I think there is a certain amount of responsibility for corporations to get involved in social activity beyond the everyday activity of doing business," Montañola says.

Call the PHEP Visayas Regional Office: (032) 233-1283 or (0918) 623-6709.

E-mail the author at rbargo@inquirer.com.ph

LARISSA M. del Cano, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

PIERRE Michael E. Corvalitos, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

MIEL Quiberio, Cebu Institute of Technology

JENELYN Belva, Cebu State College of Science and Technology

Bikers' run for toys

SOME 350 kids from the Laura Vicuna Foundation, the Visayan Forum and the Open Heart Foundation got a special treat recently from members of the Motorcycle Advocates of the Philippines (MAP).

The bikers organized a run to collect toys, as well as clothes, for the children who came from homes assisted by the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ned Honrado, MAP vice president and president of the Freedom Riders Motorcycle Club, organized the event.

Motorcyclists from various clubs assembled at the Acacia Car Park and gave the kids a ride on their bikes, on the Back-up Clubhouse.

Entrance fee was a toy, from 700 toys and 500 pieces of clothing were collected.

The 250 or so motorcyclists brought friends and families to the event.

The party at the race featured clowns, party hoodles, ice cream from Nestlé, candies from Candy Corner, games, shows and surprises.

FUN. food and games for the kids and their families

ADVENTURERS Motorcycle Club

SANTA gives the kids a ride on the motorcycle.

Sunday LIFESTYLE Home

APPLES Alexis Gotfrank

A hassle-free but elegant table setting

THE ALABANG Town Center held a two-week Holiday Table Setting Exhibit to give helpful tips to prospective hosts and hostesses.

The Home Zone area became a colorful showcase of table settings by Sheila Batera by Ayen Macli-Lourd, Ana Rocha-Castillo, Applet Alexis Gotfrank and Apol Nadia Sandoval.

Macli-Lourd gave a glimpse of Christmas Eve in the Lourd home through her classic and opulent setting. She used furniture and accessories mainly from Georgian Lane, Play & Display in collections Stone, Home & Beyond, and Batera's. Her place settings featured a profusion of vibrant red roses.

Singer and television host Isabo Sandoval opted for a minimalist approach. Her clean and unclattered design used items from Store One, Greco, Homeworx, Play & Display, and from Home Store.

Architect and interior designer Rocha-Castillo had children in mind in her setting. She combined expensive crystal from Batera's, Antiques, Iron, Play & Display, Shell Caravan, and Store One, with affordable finds from Fine Index, for a whimsical setting deliberated "to the children all of us."

Model and business columnist Alexis Gotfrank gathered vintage and modern pieces from Art-Lite, Silsilah Arts, Heritage, Home Interior and Play & Display to create a shabby-chic-inspired Christmas setting with a fun and feminine edge. A student of the Philippine School of Interior Design (PSID), she used purple and pink roses to create a relaxed yet elegant look.

The exhibit displayed the diverse tastes and distinct styles of the four designers.

Other stores that provided decorative pieces for the exhibition were Bubbapan, Bloomfields, Blanc Français, Dwellings, Inferno Walls, Make Room, Quintessence Gallery, Richwell Gift Collection, Robles Heritage, Tesoro's, The Flower Farm, and Zardilag I.A. Interiors.

MARCRIS Bernardino, ATC division manager

JOVI Hernandez, ATC general manager

AYEN Macli-Lourd

ANA Rocha-Castillo with her niece Micka Bernardino, one of the inspirations for the design

ADOT Isabo's holiday setting design was presented by her husband, Mico Sandoval

SMART Inside Rossana Prieto, Maria Herrera, Bay Martinez and Aurora San Diego

KITTY friends, Maurice Arcache, Daphne Osena, Pepper Tuchanbeo, Joji Dingcong, Sarah Isaac, Hanna Goldschli and Bergy Manalac

FAMILY affair. Alyanna, Lexi Alba and Alfonso Herrera with Marlin Herrera

Kitty and I

HAPPY couple Irene and Randy Francisco

WHEN it comes to event launches, I normally arrive in the nick of time. At the Hello Kitty One-of-a Kind Museum, I donned my new Swatch in support of Gift Gate queen Virgie Ramos and appointed just in time to introduce the guests of honor with my co-host, Joaquin Super's Tim Yap, all bubbly in a pink jumpsuit.

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

Over a thousand cuties of the Kitty Tribe casted were displayed in evolving mechanisms and the winning entries were modeled by mid-thin, teens-to-preteens models—the cute chat model no. 1 girl old or 1st, thought of season still dressy in my hot pink outfit. Every creativity took occurs stage in the Kitty room of Joaquin, all filled with differences signs. It really is a must-see on the general floor of Glorietta 2 between Ilustre and Rockin'.

I was interviewed by a little known show of GMA 7, called "Lovely Day" on why I have this fascination over Hello Kitty considering I may not even call myself a young adult anymore. Initially, I was into Kitty because of my 10-year-old, "Little-original daughter Annika, but I realized Kitty is more than a toy or accessory because of the happy spirit her items have been the handbags to the linens and everything else in between. And if we are special there is any small ears to anyone, it truly is a wonderful feeling.

CEO at play. Marcia Pangilinan with Gift Gate's Virgie Ramos

Ottoman empire splendor relived

CEBU CEBU

Jaime Piccerelli

THE CEBU chapter of La Chaine des Rotisseurs marked its 50th anniversary with a formal dinner at the Hotel Ambassador of the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort. The theme took 52 guests on a journey back in time to the ottoman empire in all its splendor.

Plans for the transformation of the ballroom were headed by esteemed members Hotel Head Chang and the resort's top PR people, Bell Bautista and Jun Champion, went up with a scene worthy of the most opulent temples at Topkapi.

Luxurious of opulence: raw silk cuts still fights on either over and with shimmering brocades of all colors. Fine crystal, china and silver added sparkle. In the piles of cushions in gold lamé a room over rich Persian carpets.

All tables had centerpieces overflowing with fragrant roses and lilies, clusters of ingredients, sprays of brilliant crystal beads, and bunches of grapes and the radishes that came in handy between courses.

Sultana rules

Amid a crowd of lovely ladies in dazzling gowns and oldays with jewels, and men either in tux or elaborate barongs, crowned Madame la Bali of the Cebu chapter, Jacqueline Lhuillier, a veritable sultana in gold-spangled gossamer beads for at all times was flanked Michel Lhuillier, who presides over Hotel Alcazar de Marcelle des Sommiers Despensieres, a complementary organization to La Chaine.

Food Frank Prieto, president of the Philippine Bellagi of La Chaine, arrived from Manila. Even before he turned seconds of the delectable menu prepared, which he carefully perused, he announced, "We have put Cebu on the gastronomic map of the world."

Full attendance

In the words of welcome, the guests joined the hundred percent attendance of the chapter officers—Chef Dionisio Dimayuga, Dr. Julian Desinguerra, Al Fernandez, Tourism Headcount and Dr. Nestor Alonzo.

The Marcos Shangri-La's general manager Tim Wright and his wife, Mona, set at the presidential table together with Michel and Jacqueline, Mr. Frivic, Jesse and Rosalind Jota, Michael and Rose Bonnevie.

The resort's resident manager, Dietrich Stiemle and his wife, Irene, sat with their best friends, Michael and Joanne Lhuillier, and one of the most beautiful women in Cebu—Ms. Ferdie Anyong.

One table had its share of lucky miracles belonging to some of Cebu's oldest and most prominent families—Margie Lhuillier, Myra Gonzales y Gonzales, Queenie Medrgale Arena, Chona Bernad, Dr. Lolita Jean Alfonso, and Jules Urbina, escorted by Dr. Ricardo Urbina.

Hispeo Tan, who runs the fast food of the Cebu chapter, was present, seated with Al E. Ilos, with and Rafael Lim, Tito Tribe who came from Manila for the, Debbie Enriquez, Monica Cortes, Peter and Bernie Collins.

Martin Klooger came from Hong Kong, where he is manager of with the Union Bank of Switzerland. Among those at his table were Nena Qua Twenty, Cebu City Councilor Jack Jakosalem and his wife, Sharon, Tony and Conchi Lizada, Ben Ong and Frances Hodges who were back with City Sports Club after a stint abroad.

Also from Hong Kong was Marquita Sulaiburgen Strong, but Carlos couldn't make it. Their pa Dom pinch-hit for him. They had lunch on another table, relaxing with Terrang M. De Dinagracia, Ann Rubio, Jesse Javier, Stella Bernabe, Dave and Joy Monge there.

Romantic couple

Billie Fernandez asked Maxine Dumon Mapp to the party, and she looked terrific. She would be inducted as a new member in February. Most romantic couple of the evening was undoubtedly the Manuel Bonets, general manager Rod Rudoy and secretary Rose Amorsi.

One couldn't help telling Tim Wright this event had had the best pre-dinner reception. Hotel & Chamber champagne flowed

CHONA Bernad, Cecilia Rodrigues, Myra Gonzales and Maria Cullen

AMARANTO and Michel Lhuillier with Evening Paradise aces

Middle Eastern music played all night. It intensified when a dancer belly dancer with tables with appeared. Would anyone care to dance? Her husband with graceful hands. Michel L. readily accepted.

Cigars, liqueurs, and chocolate bonbons were served. That was a sign for everyone to get up, mingle, and get persuaded by the entire museum to try a bit of dancing till way into past midnight.

like it was going out of style. It's usually some ghastly matching fits that you get.

Executive chef Adam Rosmorrowcroft was congratulated for his excellent food, a culinary travelogue of local ones ruled from the Sinlaran Room to breaded. The cooking he started was a la Gourmet, the banquet gourmet. Awesome, the pesto pan and mint soup with quail. Delicious, the mangosteen cream flavored with rose, fresh mousse. Where's mine?

Mme. dok-vun lamb has cooked this way then did it to tenderloin, which was a bit more. Wow! on to dessert tables! Delicious, mmm! Pistachio ice cream they might have come, they were delicious... hazelnut, macadamia figs, and pistachio ice cream.

Start 'em young

By Soraya S. Mecile
Contributor

GOOD gardeners are not only born, but also made. It is important that, as a young age, children are exposed to plants and flowers.

Don't underestimate children. They can be good gardeners if they are well-guided, encouraged and motivated. In most cases, when children and mother are partners on their vegetable gardens, trees and other plants, these children eventually become good gardeners.

Children are actually just true to play with soil and do gardening. They interest has to be carefully cultivated, and like plants, it is advisable to give them an area where they can practice growing vegetables and ornamentals, especially flowering plants. Praise them for their efforts and give them incentives. Let them understand and realize the benefits of growing flowers and vegetables.

There are many ways to introduce children to gardening. You can start by making a simulation box or planter. Better yet give them a small space in the garden. Provide them with the necessary tools, equipment and other needs. Let them choose what to plant—vegetables, ornamentals, cacti and other succulents or herbs are just some of their options.

Next is to find the area chosen for a kid's garden: get sunlight and has readily available water supply. It is also advisable to teach them the principles of soil preparation and the importance of composting.

Teach them the right manner of composting, such as this formula: one part garden soil, one part clean sand and two parts compost. Teach them how to use kitchen waste and other recyclable materials like dried leaves, hedge clippings and the like.

Never allow the children to use chemical pesticides. Show them the advantage of a potent nutrient and let them understand soil disease damage to prevent unnecessary logging.

Teach them correct clamycine or spacing between plants. Encourage eco-friendly gardening techniques and the use of organic fertilizer. Let them understand the bad effects of pollution.

Make sure that something that grow and flower fast, like petunias, lilacs, roses, marigolds, celosia, amaranths, gaillardias, asters, and vegetables, among others, for kids to practice on.

Bring your children to the Ecology Learning Center in Quezon Memorial Circle, QC. Foundation president Chanito Pitoni says the center aims to those whose residents what they can do to [illegible] and a green environment.

Pitoni and the center's employees are willing to give free lectures on organic vermiculture (earthworm propagation) and the wise use of right-space garden planters. They also discuss stress targeting of weak, much room growing, composting, artificial lawn gardening and backyard fishpond management, among others.

Contact the author at 5594393.

GREEN TIPS

UPLB: Makiling's caregiver

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaudiel Arayata

AFTER six years without communication officers at the La Mesa Watershed, we got word from the Rotaractors of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) that there were also watersheds within the Makiling range that we should not miss.

Our visit to a place only 64 km away from Manila took us on a leisurely stroll along parts lined with lush shrubs, vines, trees and more trees. As we walked, we often had to loop over cracked pavements where roots had broken through.

What a contrast it was, we thought, to the concrete and pavement like [illegible], where rage illegally cut, they can't rolled down on an avalanche, destroying lives and property, or even to places in Manila where, right this moment, trees are being cut to widen streets.

Rotarian Dr. Edwino S. Fernando, director of the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME) club is in charge of the Makiling Project Roots vs (MPR) and its programs for forest conservation and ecotourism promotion. He is also a professor of forest botany and a plant taxonomist at UPLB's College of Forestry and Natural Resources. (Who aren't people like him [illegible] resources?)

Among the first things he told us was that there were new settlements in the forest area, serving Calamba, Los Baños and Bay in Laguna, and Sto. Tomas in Batangas. There were all personnel and intermittent seasons. Eight water systems tapped these streams for domestic use.

Caretaker of an ecosystem

The reason does not only look after the trees but also the wildlife, the flora and fauna in this area, Makiling. Dr. Fernando said, was a center of biodiversity. Once the upland vegetation is cleared, it, we realized if he and his colleagues research in Makiling, they might find their forest resources turned into a graveyard of naked stumps or turned into cattle and high-rise buildings.

Fernando, an ecologist by training, said, in fact, that there are over 400 species of trees in Makiling. In the Botanic Garden, we took a trail where we experienced a real forest ecosystem, along which floated gushing streams and creeks, and where every now and then a bright-colored bird we'd never seen before flitted overhead. Our hosts made sure we didn't miss it.

DR. MOE. Abraham and his team inspect newly discovered species of flora in the Makiling Forest Reserve

Bird sanctuary

We stopped at the Center for Philippine Raptors (the Philippine hawk eagle and the great Philippine eagle, among others). The cages were not yet filled up. Most of the inhabitants came from animal lovers who sent them found injured or captured in MPR to rehabilitating and veterinary care. The Botanic Garden is one of Makiling's restaurants sites, especially outdoors and picnickers.

Dr. Fernando stressed that the MPR was primarily "a training laboratory for the advancement of scientific knowledge on forestry and natural resources. "Conservation area management mandate [keeping MPR safe] will do their visit to this area to make them aware as clientele to the forest ecosystem.

The threats might come in the form of illegal settlers or acts of vandalism. For added protection, a buffer zone was announced long ago, serving a demarcation line between the MPR and the outlying areas.

Not just a university

The UPLB is a name-embodied institution managed by dedicated Filipino scientists. In one aspect, it is a regular university offering college courses, in studies, it is a two specialized institution where study and care of an ecosystem natural environment are main concerns.

There are laboratories for all kinds of experiments and researches. From agro-forestry to bees, to biotechnology, butterfly farming, crop protection, dairy farming, down to waste treatment.

The book "The Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve

THE EXOTIC flower Rafflesia Manillana

AERIAL view of the Batangas side of Mt. Makiling. The lower portion is heavily forested, the upper portion shows the industrial zones of Batangas.

Developments Institutes & Management Corporation," written by professors and experts from the College of Forestry, said: "The [ISSUE] is a small mountain which can serve as a window to other mountain ecosystems."

To Dr. Fernando, Makiling was "a forest issue" not only for its beauty but also for the quality of its forest and environment, the economic, aesthetic and ecological benefits derived from it, as well as its long academic and research history. He called for the attention to the diversity of the MPR in his new book, "Flowering Plants and Ferns in Mt. Makiling," (sponsored by Korean scientists), illustrated with colored photos on every page. Although still for sale, it is already an important reference source for students, on the Botanic Garden in particular, and of Philippine flora in general.

There is much more to UPLB than space will allow, but we intend to go literally further afield to cover it. Soon.

E-mail the author at dorisayata@yahoo.com

FORESTER shows results of reforestation and conservation efforts of the Batangas side of the MPR in 1911, the same site area had no.

THE ALMOST complete family photo... with only youngest daughter Bettina missing

FAMILY and guests of Lilio and Becky

Ararity of a marriage

By Kaci L. Formoso
Contributor

MARRIAGE these days isn't what it used to be. A person may get married today and be single again in just a few years, months or even days.

Very few can match the longevity of the union of my ubuntito and ubuchin—Lilio and Becky Jade Mabucol Formoso.

Today, Dec. 26, my bro and his ate are celebrating 51 years of wonderful, love-filled marriage. Last year, of course, when they marked the 50th year since they made their vows, the celebration was really special.

A lot of time and effort was put into the preparation for the celebration this Tito Lilio & Candaberi was feeling harassed overseeing all the arrangements for the important evening. Tito Jhaggry Formoso came all the way from the United States for the celebration.

My bro and bro, and the rest of the family had our work cut out for us. Only a few would imagine the excitement and happiness when she arrived. I thought my bro was going to have a heart attack!

Unfortunately, my Tito Bettina Formoso, who is also based in the US, could not make it. Still, the evening turned out to be a beautiful and memorable occasion for my bro and Tita.

The celebration began with a renewal of their wedding vows administered by the distinguished Fr. James D. Hoover, SJ, a dear family friend. The sight of my grandparents saying their "I dos" all over again was a sweet and loving sight. My parents, sons, bro, wife willing couples participated in the ritual.

The guests, composed only of family and close friends, were dismissed by the intimate and humorous ceremony. When it was over, everyone made a beeline to the buffet table laden with different Spanish and Filipino dishes. Dessert had the whole room in a frenzy as "Sweet Sue" family members and friends caught up with one another. It was heartwarming to see everyone laughing and sharing stories.

The most important part of the evening was the program that we prepared. My bro was a Hawaiian; teacher to her younger days and her favorite song was the "Hawaiian Wedding Song". So the immediate family, composed of my parents, Ed and Bro Jeromic, Tito Jhaggry, Tito Miles and my funny uncle, Tito Noli Cumahoy, my sister Rebecca and my youngest cousin, Monica Cumahoy, performed different Hawaiian dances in appropriate costumes.

But the big hit was the number of my crazy dad and uncle who performed their own ridiculous version of a Hawaiian dance in grass skirts! The number got a standing ovation.

Attention then focused on the big screen showing photographs of my grandparents when they were young.

I had the privilege of narrating the story of their lives as pictures flashed on the screen. Funny comments were made as most guests saw younger versions of themselves on screen. The presentation ended with videos from distant relatives greeting my grandparents "Happy anniversary!"

The program ended with my father, their only son, giving a toast. I have never seen my father cry in my entire life. But this time, I saw tears well in his eyes. He choked on his words as he told his parents how we all loved them and that they will wear the greatest parents anyone could ever ask for. By this time everyone had tears in their eyes.

My bro and ate were very touched, you could see it in their teary eyes.

When the program ended, it was time for family pictures on the cadera. The party broke up at the wee hours of the morning.

Today, the day after Christmas, my bro and his wife celebrate another year of togetherness with their children and grandchildren.

Today, Lilio and Becky Formoso are celebrating 51 years of love and togetherness

MORE family members and guests

THE FINALE... the children, their spouses and the grandchildren, deserving a standing ovation from the guests

Milestones

TM's accepting announcements of weddings and engagements. Please send the following typewritten information: names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, gown designer and other related information. Brothers can send diarchos of groom and pictures of the couple to the Features office, at PO. Box 2357 Makati Central Post Office 1257 Makati City, or e-mail lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. This will be printed depending on space availability and at no cost to the sender.

PEREZ-LUTCE

Jose Bonnelle A. Perez, son of Leonardo D. Lo Giovanni and Pat A. Perez of Baguio City will exchange marriage vows with Hyke Ulibe, daughter of Dr. Onuma and Shiko Ulibe of Toyama City, Japan, on Jan. 4, 2005, at the Manila Cathedral. Reception will follow at Rockwell, Intramuros. The bride will wear a pure white chemise and sabrina neckline gown made of duchess satin with an A-line skirt extended at the back accentuated with beadwork. The gowns of the bride and her entourage are courtesy by Benig Estrilanza of Baguio City. The Eucharistic celebration will be officiated by Rev. Fr. Richard L. Salas, the groom's high school classmate.

SERRANO-DEL ROSARIO

Daddy and Debbie were married on Dec. 18 at the Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park.

RAMIREZ-ROMERO

Miles Thaddeus Ramirez, youngest son of Manuel and Dr. Lydia Ramirez, will marry Clarissa Grace Romero, eldest daughter of Roberto and Rosa Isabel Romero, on Dec. 30 at Saint Joseph Parish, Zamboanga City. Reception will follow at Astoria Regency Zamboanga City.

The bride will wear a duchess silk princess-cut gown with three-quarter detachable train, accentuated with floral cascading multi-colored embroidery, beadwork with silver threading accent. Instructed Swarovski crystals will make the gown designed by Marlene J. Mercado-Apalisok.